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FAMILY EXPOSITIONS.

FAMILY EXPOSITIONS:

ON THE

EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN AND ST. JUDE;

AND THOSE OF

ST. PAUL TO TIMOTHY.

BY THE REV. E. BICKERSTETH,

RECTOR OF WATTON, HERTS.

SECOND EDITION; ENLARGED.

Seeleys.

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PREFACE.

I FEEL anxious that the reader should not mistake the character of these expositions. They do not at all pretend to be critical and exact. They are abridged notes of those explanations, and simple practical remarks on the sacred text, which I gave in morning worship, and which appeared at the time likely to be useful to my own family. They were written down by my children, without any view to publication, for their own benefit. The manuscripts were lent among their friends, and it was only after many requests that the author, giving them such slight revision as his many occupations allowed, has agreed to their publication. If the Lord shall bless them to the good of those who read them, or of families where they may be used, it will manifestly be another example that he can employ weak instruments in His service; and let the praise be to Him alone. Should this be the case, the author may be encouraged to publish more of these expositions, similar notes having been taken on all the books of the New Testament, from the Epistle to the Philippians to the close of Revelation.

Since this preface was written, it has pleased the Lord to lay the author aside from all work for a season. He asks the prayers of his readers that the affliction may be sanctified, and that the Lord will graciously prosper the diffusion of truth which he feels increasingly precious to his own soul.

Watton Rectory, Herts,
March 26, 1846.

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FAMILY EXPOSITIONS.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life.*

This is usually called the *epistle* of John, though in some respects it differs from the other epistles: not being addressed to any Church in particular, or having any local or individual references. St. John has been called in the Church 'the Divine John,' because there is such a peculiar spirituality and elevation above the world, in his character. His Gospel, Epistles, and the Apocalypse, are written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in the very spirit of heaven. The heading of the epistle is 'the first general, or catholic, epistle of John the Apostle.' Catholic means universal; it is not a word that occurs in scripture, they therefore who build so much upon, and glory so much in, the word Catholic, lay another foundation besides that which scripture has laid. But there is a right and important use of the word. One article of our creed is 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' by which we mean especially that one universal spiritual Church of which Christ is the head, consisting of those who believe

in his name, and love him in sincerity, which has been gathering from every land and nation, and age and rank, and which shall be perfected in glory.

Let us consider now the message of this blessed apostle to the universal Church; it is that of one who had himself known and experienced, served and loved the Saviour, and who desired that all should partake of his happiness. Observe the title he gives to our blessed Lord, "the Word of life." In what way is Christ the Word? The words of a man represent to us his thoughts; by them we become acquainted with what is passing in his mind; so by Christ we know what is the mind of God to us, we have saving and powerful knowledge of God, through Christ the Word of God. Do we desire to see the holiness of God? In Christ it is manifested, for God cannot allow one sinner to approach him, but through the Divine Mediator. Do we desire to see the justice of God? In the agonies of Christ it is manifested, not one sin could be pardoned without them. Do we desire to see the mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness of God? In the cross of Christ it is made clear as the noon-day. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of His person; and thus we have one in our nature, living as a man, and yet displaying in every action the attributes of God, showing us what the heart of God is towards us. But besides being "the Word," Christ is "*the word of life;*" in him was life, and the life is the light of men. He is the author and maintainer of spiritual life now, and of eternal life yet to come. Here then the most favoured and heavenly-minded of the servants of God, inspired to be our infallible guide, directs us in the way to find full joy;—if you have not full joy yet, try God's way for obtaining it, and you shall gain it.

"*That which was from the beginning.*" This is very similar to the beginning of the gospel of St. John: the time referred to, is before the foundation of the world, when Jesus was one with the Father from all eternity. How distinctly this brings out his Divine glory and Godhead! We have a like statement, Prov. viii. 22. He was from

the beginning, not merely like ourselves, immortal, but eternal, from everlasting to everlasting. How striking, in this view, is the next statement—"*which we have heard, which we have seen, which our hands have handled.*" Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. He who was from the beginning, assumed our nature, and was manifested in a human body ; week after week, month after month, he dwelt with us as a man upon earth ; man saw the glories of his perfect character, heard the wisdom of his discourses, and his mighty miracles were wrought in the sight of thousands. Now this comes down to our wants and experience. Talk of sublime things, talk of genius and talent,—what trifles they all are, compared with the Creator of all, dwelling in our nature : this should fill every mind, and warm every soul : this is the road to full joy.

2. *For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

"*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it.*" Observe the title of Christ, *the life ;* he says of himself, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.* He is the source and fountain-head of life, from whom we derive all spiritual life. He is our life, as distinct from natural life, though that too is from Him,—"without Him was not any thing made that was made"—as distinct also *now* from the life of glory. This life was manifested in his temper and spirit, his discourses and labours, his miracles and his death, his resurrection and ascension. We have seen it not merely with our bodily eyes—in that sense the Scribes and Pharisees saw it—but our Lord Jesus says of his disciples. "*Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see ;*" their eyes were opened to discern the spiritual life. "*And we bear witness ;*" here is our office,—for this we are separated from the world, and numbered among the children of God.

and have the hope of glory, that we may bear witness—"With the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." "*And shew unto you*"—a special application of the truth for which we witness, to others, like the message of the angels; "*Unto you* is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "That eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Observe here, the mysterious doctrine of the distinctness, and yet the unity of the persons in the Holy Trinity, the eternal life *was with the Father*—not, *was the Father*—according to early heresies that troubled the Church.

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

We have indeed here a blessed and glorious subject, communion with the great Jehovah, and communion with our fellow-christians; first, then, communion with God as a Father—man, sinful man—being brought to a oneness of mind with God, delighting in his character, seeking to attain his image. Naturally we are in a state of enmity towards God, but receiving the new nature, being born of the Spirit, that new nature delights in God; we see that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; we are brought into a state of harmony with all the perfections and attributes of God, with his justice, his holiness, his wrath against sin, his righteous judgment upon sinners, with his grace, and mercy, and love. We are brought into harmony with his word, with the holiness of his law, the sweetness of his promises, his having an elect people, whom he chooses out of the world. We are brought into harmony with his providential dealings, we learn to say in the midst of trials and afflictions, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We see wisdom, righteousness, and loving-kindness stamped upon all. We are also

brought into yet more direct and experimental fellowship with the Father, by daily walking with God, continual intercourse and communion between God and our souls. But our fellowship is not only with the Father, but also "with his Son Jesus Christ." We enter into all Christ has done for us—into all the offices he bears for us, as Shepherd, Prophet, Priest and King; we have fellowship with him in the use of the ordinary blessings of life; the way we walk in, the sun which cheers, the bread which nourishes us, lead us to Christ. The closest intimacy, that between husband and wife, is only a type and figure of the yet closer intimacy which subsists between the redeemed soul and the Redeemer. St. John says *truly*, "our fellowship is with the Father," because, though hidden from the world—("the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God")—yet it is not merely a knowledge, there is a *reality* in it,—it is our life, it enters into the daily experience of a Christian. The fellowship of Christians with one another, is called in the Apostles' creed, "the communion of saints." Freedom from selfishness and self-exaltation is the character of the gospel of Christ—we are vessels of mercy to bear mercy. Christians are all born of God, and are to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Baptism is the means of admission into the Church, and the Lord's Supper is the appointed means and token of maintaining this fellowship, denoting to all, and conveying to the believer, the gift of the Spirit, and communion with Christ. As we are all partakers of one bread, so are we all joined in one body. Many are the blessings which Christians enjoy in common. One Father, one Redeemer, one Sanctifier, one hope of glory which animates them all. Besides these, however, they have each special gifts, both in temporal and spiritual things; some have wealth, some influence, some time and strength—some have faith more prominently—some have more humility, some more hope, some more love, some powers of mind, some judgment, some

patience : in all these things then we are to have fellowship one with another.

"*That which we have seen and heard.*" Some have doubted whether John is speaking of Christ Himself or of the doctrines of Christ. I believe that he speaks of Christ, from that expression, "which our hands have handled." It is the great fact of the Incarnation, the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, which he speaks of as having seen and heard. Here I observe, that if we get hold of the great facts of our holy Religion, the doctrines flow more easily and distinctly from them. Some have objected to the Apostle's Creed, as being a mere statement of facts : whereas, when those facts are realized, the doctrines naturally follow. Thus the fact of the incarnation is the grand connecting link which draws men first to God, and then to each other. If I believe that God really appeared on earth in my nature, and died for my sins,—If I believe He died not only for my sins, but also for the sins of the whole world, what a centre of attractiom this becomes, between me and my fellow-men. I gain a brother's heart towards them ;—drawn first to Christ, we are drawn to each other in Him. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me,"—"unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Having seen, then, and heard this fact, the Apostle says—"*We declare it unto you.*" Observe, saving truths which we know, we are to make known to others ; blessings we have received, we are to communicate.

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Fulness of joy is the object to be attained ; and nowhere else, than in fellowship with the Father, with his Son Jesus Christ, and with each other, is fulness of joy to be found. There be many that say, "Who will shew us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, thou hast put gladness in my heart," &c.—"in

thy presence is fulness of joy." My dear family, if you are unhappy, gloomy, or desponding, it is because you are far from God, and it is this blessed doctrine of Christ's atonement that brings us near to God, Ephes. ii. 13. Oh, may none ever keep back that truth, which an inspired apostle tells us leads us to the fountain of full joy.

The world promises great joy to those who follow its course, in the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, in self-indulgence, and in various earthly pleasures which it sets before us, for which we have a natural appetite. The world gives *assurance* of joy in these things—we have this clearly set before us in Eccles. xi. 9, 10, and xii. 1. The same lesson is taught here. We may observe that the most spiritual, holy and devoted of the Apostles, is the one who aims most at our full joy,—full joy, is constant joy having every desire of the renewed and immortal spirit fully gratified. The way to enjoy this happiness, is not by enjoying the lusts of the natural carnal heart. What then is the way? "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart." This is the only true way to have the perfect gratification of our wishes—to follow the directions of God's word, and delight to do his will. At first sight religion seems to require so many things, that it appears hard and austere. It is the devil's artifice to put a dismal colour on the ways of Christ; but "these things I write unto you that your joy may be full."—He who loves us best, even God, aims at our fulness of joy in all the directions which he gives.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*

"*This then is the message.*" It is the custom of St. John to bring out a leading truth in this way—so he says "*This is the promise which He hath promised us,*" &c. and again "*this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life.*"

Here then we have a message from God Himself, given through the last of the inspired writers, the beloved and favoured Apostle St. John, nearly a hundred years after the birth of Christ. With what reverence, confidence, and attention should we receive it! "*Which we have heard of Him and declare unto you.*" What ministers teach others, they must themselves be taught of God, and receive into their own heart. What comes from the heart will go to the heart! the right view of ministers is—they are those bearing a message from God. What then is this message? —"*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*" Oh how this meets our carnal hearts, which would put away all thoughts of God, and have as little as possible to do with God. *God is light*—let us endeavour to get into this truth. He is light, as the fulness of knowledge dwells in him, how infinite and unfathomable his knowledge. He that made the ear, shall he not hear? or the eye,—shall he not see? Again,—he is light, as he is purity and holiness. He is the standard and measure of holiness, altogether separate from evil. He is light, as he is joy and gladness. And this light is the light of love, in which all may share without impoverishing any, as all may partake of the light of the sun, without diminishing its rays, or robbing another of the gladness it diffuses. Oh come into this light, and then reflect its glories in your spirit and whole life. We are incompetent indeed here to gain more than transient glimpses of God; but this one truth, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, no ignorance, no sin, no gloom or misery—not a shade of evil of any kind, altogether good, is full of blessing to ourselves and to others when truly received by us. The world hates God. Satan endeavours in every way to misrepresent God. His providence may often appear dark and hard—but let us silence all with this truth. God is light—here is the standard we are to lift up against the enemy when he comes in like a flood; let us constantly come to this light and dwell in its cheering rays.

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

This is a special danger of these last times ; "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." There are various ways in which we may say that we have fellowship with him ; by family worship, by every act of social or private prayer, by meeting in His house, and especially by going to the Lord's Table where we profess to have the communion of His body and blood. In these and other ways we say that we have fellowship with him. But saying that we have it, and really having it, are very different things—and here is the proof whether we have it or not—"*If* while *we say, we have fellowship with Him, we walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*" God is light —we have considered what that light is, the light of knowledge, of purity, and of joy—but if we walk in darkness, we are going on in error, in ignorance of God, in impurity of heart, in worldliness, in hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water. We have fellowship—not with God, but with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Our life therefore is a practical contradiction of our profession. We lie, and do not the truth, for the truth would sanctify us and make us free. Our God has then given us a solemn warning against this great device of Satan, with which he deludes souls. God preserve us all from only having a name to live while we are dead.

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Here is the whole happy life of a Christian-fellowship with God and with his brethren, and entire cleansing from

sin in the blood of Jesus. "*If we walk in the light as he is in the light.*" Take that one truth—he is in the light, like a glorious sun which gives light to all, but derives it from none. He dwells in the light of his own glorious perfections and attributes. He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, and which is only to be discerned in Christ—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shines in the heart, in the face of Jesus Christ." He dwells in the light of truth, holiness, love, omnipotence, omniscience. omnipresence. He is the source of all glory and excellence in every creature—all is derived from him as its Fountain-head.

We are to walk in this light. "We all beholding, as with open face, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." There is that hunger and thirst in all our souls, which nothing but likeness to God can satisfy—"then shall I be satisfied, when I awake up after thy likeness." To walk in the light then, is continually to realize, that "God is my reconciled Father in Christ," and that he imputes not my trespasses unto me. To have the light of this love shining full in my heart; and this, observe, not a transient thing,—we are to *walk* in the light; it is said of Enoch, he *walked* with God; a steady progressive daily walking with God; having communion with him as with our most intimate friend. "*We have fellowship one with another.*" Every word is here precious; walking together in light, we have fellowship together, we walk together in the light of knowledge, the knowledge that we are guilty and ruined creatures, that we have a common Saviour, a common Father, a common home; the knowledge that we have the same evil nature to fight with and to overcome, the same glory to attain. Here is the ground of true fellowship; where there is pride and selfishness, and vain glory, there can be no fellowship. "*And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*" Notice those emphatic words, *his Son.* Here is what gives the preciousness to the blood, that He, who

was co-equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead, became man, and died in our nature.

Then observe the cleansing with his blood: this we have continually brought before us—"Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and honour." The blood of Christ has a twofold effect, it cleanses us from our guilt and from the power of sin.

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Observe that little word *all*—*all sin*. Oh, what a life-boat in the tempest, has this one word been to many a poor awakened sinner! Oh, how many souls has this one text preserved from ruin and despair! However numerous, however great our sins, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Observe here, opposite errors brought side by side, the Antinomian error, to say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness; the self-righteous error, to say we have no sin: both are equally destructive to the soul. God's own truth is in full harmony with apparently opposite sayings. The Christian cannot walk in darkness, while at the same time the Christian cannot say, "I have no sin." There is in him that evil nature which lusts against the Spirit, and causes him continually to fall short of his own purposes and desires; his aim is, "whatsoever he does in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," but the corruptions of his heart cause him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." This text appears conclusive against a doctrine which a zealous body of Christians

hold, the doctrine of sinless perfection, attainable by man in this life.

Self-righteousness may proceed from various causes, from unscriptural modes of expression, and from straining particular passages, or from an inadequate view of the spirituality of the law of God, from an ignorance of the corruption of our hearts, from having a low standard of religious attainment, or from comparing ourselves with others. St. Paul, as he grew in knowledge and holiness, grew also in humility, and thought himself the chief of sinners. To think then that we have no sin, is *to deceive ourselves:* and what is the use of self-deception?—we cannot deceive God, we cannot ultimately deceive our fellow-men, our character will be laid bare, and made clear as the noon-day: but not only we deceive ourselves, "*the truth is not in us,*" instead of the light and peace, the joy and liberty of truth, we have the misery, darkness, and disquietude of error. God preserve us, therefore, from this self-deception of saying or thinking we have no sin.

9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So the Prodigal Son, when he said, "Father, I have sinned," was freely and frankly forgiven;—so David when he confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord," was answered, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." But there is nothing more difficult, than frank, full confession is to our carnal nature;—there is in us all such a strong self-justifying tendency. We see it, immediately after the fall, in our first parents. This self-justification prevents all unity between us and God, and leaves us dark and disquieted. Yet we must feel, as well as outwardly confess, our sinfulness; but how is this to be attained? there is a vail upon all our hearts which hides our sinfulness from us;—the Holy Ghost, *given to those that ask*, (do not lose sight of that) convinces of sin, removes the vail of igno-

rance and unbelief, produces in us contrition and humility before God, teaches us to renounce our own righteousness, and come as guilty sinners before God. Observe, it is not a mere general confession that we have sinned: every one will acknowledge that: but that we have been altogether and thoroughly wrong in our whole course by nature; aiming at our own glory, and not God's; to do our own will and not God's; to please ourselves and not God. What, then, will be the result of thus confessing our sins? In an earthly court of justice, the law takes its course; if a prisoner pleads guilty, he is not acquitted by confessing his crime. But with God, it is just the reverse: he says, "only acknowledge thine iniquity," confess your sins and I will forgive them; and on what ground is forgiveness thus offered? On two of the most unlikely grounds we could imagine, the faithfulness and justice of God. His faithfulness! why, he has declared, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." His justice! why, is He not the righteous Judge of the whole earth,—bound therefore to punish iniquity? Yet still he is faithful and just to forgive. He has entered into a gracious and wonderful covenant with us for this end. He has solemnly sworn, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner." He is faithful to his promises, faithful to his covenant engagement when he forgives. But how is he also just? He has said, "he will not acquit the guilty." He is just in forgiving, because the sentence has all been fulfilled in the sinner's substitute; the Lord Jesus Christ bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that God might "be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,"—"a just God, and yet a Saviour." Thus you see faithfulness and justice, those attributes which seem altogether to condemn the sinner, and are so terrible to him, are now, through the death of the Lord Jesus, all on the believer's side. Now, my dear family, this is the only way of forgiveness; if you reject it, you perish for ever. How should you escape, if you neglect so great a salvation? And on the other hand, if you embrace it, you will gain all joy and peace in believing.

10. *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

The danger of self-righteousness, and its awful consequences, are here very strikingly set before us. God having declared distinctly in his word, as his deliberate judgment upon all men, "that there is none that doeth good, no not one, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"—when we say that we have not sinned, we call the God of truth a liar. "*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar;*" and this includes not merely a denial of general sinfulness, but a denial that in every thing we come short of the glory of God. Oh! see, my dear family, all is sinful: our prayers want praying over, our tears of godly sorrow want washing in the blood of Jesus, our charity wants forgiveness, our best actions cannot stand in the judgment before God. This feeling of corruption and guilt is the daily burden of a Christian. The apostle does not mean to say, they outwardly and avowedly call God a liar; few are so atrocious and blasphemous as that; but by denying their sinfulness they practically make him a liar, as by denying their salvation in Christ, they do the same thing as St. John says in the last chapter and tenth verse of this same epistle. "And his word is not in us." Neither Christ as the living word, nor the written word of God, can be dwelling in those, who say that they have not sinned.

CHAPTER II.

1. *My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

"*My little children.*" The term he uses shews his love toward them. Many of those to whom he wrote might be fifty or sixty years of age. St. John himself was, I suppose, at this time nearly a hundred years of age, and with all the tenderness of love he calls them, "my little children:"—"*these things write I unto you that ye sin not.*" —The glorious message of free forgiveness on the one hand, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us"—and the warning against self-righteousness on the other, are given, not to encourage us to sin, but *that ye sin not.* The doctrines of a free salvation, without any works or goodness of our own, so far from being unfriendly to holiness, are the only doctrines which can enable us to be holy, and produce good works. "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate.*" There is a defiling heresy spreading now in the church, that sin committed after baptism is unpardonable, or that it can only be pardoned by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This passage is a two-edged sword against both these errors; shewing on the one hand, that God's children do sin, and on the other, that the way of pardon is through the mediation of Jesus Christ:—"*if any—sin,* the word *man* is not in the original, he was speaking to them as little children, he therefore means if any of *us* sin,—we who have been baptized in the name of Jesus, who have given our hearts to God. There remains in the Christian the old man, the flesh, as well as the new man, and in many things we offend all; there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Those saints of God about whose sinfulness after their conversion little is said in the Bible, Daniel and Paul, have left the most humble confessions of their own sinfulness. We must not be surprised if, as we pay more attention to religion, we seem to grow more vile and sinful. Those who know most of themselves, do not see in themselves a thousandth part of the evil God sees in them. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the hearts, I try the reins." Seeing we are thus sinful, "we

have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Observe first, He is altogether righteous, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; then, He is with the Father, always in his presence, the Lamb as it had been slain stood in the midst of the throne. Then he is our Advocate, the word may also mean Comforter. Let us examine some of the grounds of comfort we have in Christ being our advocate; First, he is inexpressibly dear to God, he lay in his bosom from all eternity, the love of the Father to the Son is intense—utterly inconceivable. Is not this a ground of comfort? Again—He wears our very form, he ascended with it into heaven, he pleads there for us, as his brethren after the flesh. Again—He has actually borne our sins, he appears for us as our substitute, he pleads that our sins were put away by his blood, that he obeyed the law for us. He prays for spiritual gifts for us, he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Then observe the person of the Advocate, "Jesus," God our Saviour, "Christ," the anointed one, altogether *righteous;* what a wonderful truth is this, that one perfectly righteous pleads for us sinners! It is absolutely necessary that our Advocate should be righteous. God cannot look upon a sinner, every thing sinful is an abomination in his sight. Oh look to this Advocate. Ever approach to God only in his name. Ever rely only on his merits.

2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

It is not only the righteousness of Christ which makes Him a suitable advocate for us, but He has wrought out a propitiatory sacrifice in his own person. This is clearly pointed out in Rom. iii. 25. "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.*" We have then a constant and ever enduring mercy-seat in the death

of Jesus, no man cometh unto the Father but by him. He is our *Propitiation*—the original allusion is to the mercy-seat covering the ark. Thus Christ fulfils in himself all the types given of him under the law of Moses; He is the sacrifice, and He is the High Priest offering up the sacrifice; He is the mercy-seat, and His is the blood sprinkled upon it. The term propitiation signifies that by him God is made *Propitious* or favourable to us. The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;"—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." The Lord Jesus offers Himself,—"Lo, I come to do thy will, Oh my God." He obeys the whole law in our place, and notwithstanding his obedience, takes upon himself the curse of the broken law. See then how the matter stands; all our guilt is made to meet on Jesus, the law is fulfilled by him in our name, and in this glorious aspect he is our propitiation; regarding this, the Father can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus. May we never be moved away from this hope of the gospel. "*And not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" Here we have a blessed and most glorious truth; the full redemption of Christ; his death, not only for the Jewish nation, not only for his elect people, but also for the whole world—"not for ours only." John may be speaking either as a Jew or as a Christian, he probably takes in both in the word *ours*, and shews that Christ died for the whole human race, even for those who ultimately perish in their sins. This is made very clear to my mind by Isaiah liii. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and by 1 Tim. ii. 6. 2 Peter ii. 1. From such statements as these—"Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it," —"He laid down his life for the sheep,"—many devoted Christians maintain that Christ died only for the elect; this appears to me contrary to this and similar plain statements of God's word." "God so loved the world, that

He gave his only-begotten Son, &c." "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." Every human being therefore has a part, share and interest in the death of Christ. But then shall the purchase of his blood be fruitless as to those that perish? Oh no! it awfully shows the evil of sin, the inexcusableness of the sinner in neglecting so great a salvation, and the righteousness of God in his condemnation. This truth lays a solid foundation for our hope and comfort; we may each one come to Christ, each one feel, He shed his heart's blood for me. The effect of this love on the believer's heart is irresistable; if we know him we shall keep his commandments.

3. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Observe, here are two kinds of knowledge: knowing Christ, and knowing that we know him. We may know Christ, and not know that we know him, from the feebleness of our faith, and the coldness of our obedience.

Let us see, first, what it is to know Christ:—St. Paul says, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." There is the knowledge of the understanding, which is very important in its way; knowing the scripture testimony about Christ, is a step to inward knowledge: for instance, I may with the understanding know Christ as a shepherd, from knowing what are the offices of a shepherd, and seeing them all fulfilled in Christ; but to know him by inward experience is to look up to him as *my* shepherd; to hear his voice and follow him, to trust to his protection, and confide in his care. So with regard to Christ as a propitiation, we may understand it by taking a just view of the sacrifices of the law of Moses, and the way in which they atone for sin; but we only know it experimentally, when we feel the load of guilt, and come as weary and heavy-laden sinners to

Christ, applying all this atonement to ourselves. This then is the true knowledge of Christ. Besides this experimental knowledge, and through it, we may get an assurance that we thus knew him. Oh! my dear family, if to know Christ be life eternal, and not to know him is to perish for ever, how important that we should get an inward consciousness, each for ourselves, that we have that knowledge. There should be no doubt about it in a Christian's mind. But how may we attain it? "*Hereby* we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." This is the practical consequence of the propitiation; we thus judge, that one died for all, that they who live, should not live unto themselves; we love him because he first loved us, and we reckon that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Here are the two great commands, and if the death of Jesus has wrought this in us, we know that we know him. Is it then your constant aim to walk in all the commandments? do you dread breaking any? is it your desire and delight to do the whole will of God?

4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.*

This comes with peculiar energy from St. John, the aged apostle, full of love, who had lived to see the abuse of the gospel. It almost appears harsh at first: "*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.*" Observe true love is different from the world's love, the world counts it the height of unkindness to call a man a liar—true love speaks the truth. There is a great deal of false profession in the world; St. James met with it in those who said they had "faith, but had not works." St. John here finds it in those who profess to have divine knowledge, but have not obedience. Here is the test of all professions: by their fruits ye shall know them. This setting aside of works is Antinomianism. Divine knowledge, to know

God, is a thing so heavenly and excellent, that it is no wonder there are many counterfeits. But where knowledge is not fruitful unto obedience, it is not true, experimental, divinely-taught knowledge. The truth sanctifies, the truth makes us free. If we think we know God, when we are not keeping his commandments, we are only deceiving ourselves and others, and under the delusion of the father of lies; the truth is not in us.

5. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him.*

This testimony of St. John, against the Antinomian perversion of the gospel, is very striking, especially when we remember that we have the same testimony in St. Paul, and St. James, and St. Jude: and it teaches us while we rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to watch very carefully that we have the sanctifying effect of the gospel in our lives. "*Whoso keepeth his word.*" This is a larger term than *his commandment*, in the preceding verse; his word being the fountain and spring of his commandment; to keep his word, then, is to keep it as a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths; to be guided by it in every perplexing case, and in keeping it, to find great reward. We should believe it to be the very pathway to happiness, that infinite wisdom and love has marked out to us. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right unto the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city." "In him verily is the love of God perfected;" God's love, that is, has its completion, its end is answered, God dwelleth in him, and he in God; it may be viewed in various lights objectively, he rejoices in God's love, it is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit; subjectively, he also is filled with love to God, and abounds in love to others. "*Hereby know we that we are in him;*" observe, *assurance* unconnected with holiness and obedience is of no value at all, *assurance* founded on

holiness and obedience, is a most scriptural doctrine. "Give *all diligence to make your calling and election sure.*"

6. *He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

We have here the whole of a Christian's life, abiding in Christ, a profession of it, and a life consistent with that profession. Abiding in Christ is exercising a constant faith in Christ,—it is expressed in various ways; receiving Christ, believing in his name, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, looking unto Jesus, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith: where there is this abiding in Christ, it must be confessed;—"with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." But then here comes a snare and a danger; confession of Christ brings the love and esteem of the children of God,—the Church honours us for it; therefore our corrupt heart, especially the corrupt heart of an unconverted man who has no other abiding in Christ than that of an outward profession, is tempted to say he abides in Christ, when he does not. He thus claims the character and privileges of a Christian, while his life testifies that he is far off from God. How then are we to discriminate between a mere profession and the reality? "*He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.*" That is, Jesus will be the model in every thing, of the real Christian. Oh! what varied graces combine in Jesus! what humility and holiness, what a spirit of prayer, what devotedness to his Father's will, what zeal for God, what tenderness towards men, what self-sacrifice; now this is to be our pattern. How strange would it be, if the arm were to rebel against the body, or the branch bear different fruit from the tree! and it is equally strange if we profess to abide in Christ, and have the mind and spirit of Christ. "He that abideth in

Christ, bringeth forth much fruit." God give us all this sweet evidence of abiding in him.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.*

"*Brethren,*"—a sweet term shewing the relation of Christians to each other, and their common relation to one Father,—"*I write no new commandment unto you, but the old commandment.*" This commandment which was from the beginning, we find in the eleventh verse of the next chapter is, "To love one another." It is the commandment which Cain violated when he slew his brother, and it is the sum and substance of the law of Moses. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself; for love is the fulfilling of the law." It is that which our Saviour calls the first and great commandment. "*Which was from the beginning.*" Why is this so often reiterated and repeated? To show the unchangeableness of God's law; it is like the sun, which is the same now, as when it shone upon Adam and Eve, and has continued the same through all God's dispensations, and through every age.

8. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

"*A new commandment.*" But if we turn to John xiii. 34, we shall find it is the same as the old commandment; our blessed Saviour there says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another," as if it were quite fresh. How can this be? A well-instructed scribe

brings out of the treasury things new and old, and old things become new, on account of the fresh power and vigour thrown into them. Let us go on with the verse, it will solve the mystery, "*which thing is true, in him, and in you.*" It is true in him: for never was such an exhibition of love before, since the world began, as when the only-begotten Son of God came into our world in our nature, to live and die for us. It is true in you, for Christians are now called as they never were before, to a largeness of love, a warmth, a vigour, a perseverance of love. It was so in the first Christians, so that the heathen around them took knowledge of it as a reproach, and quite treated it with contempt. "See," said they, "how these Christians love one another." Thus it is both an old and a new commandment; God give us grace to obey it. "*Because the darkness is past,*" light is thrown upon judgment, upon eternity, upon the resurrection, upon immortality, by the death of Christ, so that the old commandment receives such fresh force, as to become new. "The darkness is past;"—there are various degrees of darkness, there is midnight darkness, and twilight darkness; we may distinguish three kinds, the darkness of ignorance, of sin, and of sorrow. There was, no doubt, much excellent and precious knowledge in the Mosaic, and in the prophetical dispensation, but Christ was the sun which burst upon the dark and ignorant world. "The light of the glory of God shines in the heart, in the face of Jesus Christ;" so that the darkness of sin is dispelled by the coming of Christ. "I send thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God." "He gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And the darkness of sorrow also;—look at the beautiful charge in Isaiah lxi. 3; "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Thus, just in proportion as we know Christ, we shall be delivered from ignorance, sin, and

sorrow. "*And the true light now shineth.*" Every thing about Christ is true; he is the true God and eternal life; he is the faithful witness, he is the true vine, so here the *true light* now shineth. This light is to be found in the writings of holy men, and in the faithful ministry of devoted servants of Christ; but all human writings and teachings have a mixture of darkness with the light. Whether we look at Fathers, Reformers, or ministers of our own day, we must confess that all human teaching is mixed with human infirmity. If we want pure unadulterated light we must go to the word of God for it, there the true light, made clear to us by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, now shineth.

9. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now.*

To be in the light, is to be translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, having the light of God's love shining in my heart, knowing that I am a child of God, and an heir of his glory. He *saith* he is in the light; so far all may be well; if we are in the light it is our duty to confess it, to hold fast the *profession* of our faith, to confess Christ before men. But alas! it is a false saying, for he "hateth his brother." This is a glaring inconsistency, this shows at once he never was in the light—it is not said, "he loveth not his brother," but he "*hateth his brother;*" he has Cain's spirit—"Am I my brother's keeper?" Want of love passes on to malice, envy, bitterness, spite, revenge, till at last he hateth his brother. Now we must distinguish between strong testimony against evil in others, and real hatred. Look at Matt. xxiii. and see the strong and bitter denunciations pronounced against the Pharisees by our blessed Saviour. Was it because he did not love them? No, it was the strength of his love; the earnest effort of love to save them. The kind and skilful physician does not skin over a sore, and allow it to eat into the vitals; he gives pain,

he probes the wound, that he may heal it thoroughly. But "*he that hateth his brother is in darkness, even until now.*" It may be very pleasant to our carnal nature, to indulge feelings of malice and bitterness towards those against whom we may have a prejudice—but while it appears to be light, it is in reality all darkness and misery, the very opposite of comfort and happiness. Oh watch against nourishing unkind feelings in your heart against any one!

10. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

Abiding in the light and abiding in Christ is very much the same thing. If I can rise to this state of mind, that notwithstanding my guilt, and perverseness, and rebellion, and the body of sin and death which I bear about with me, God does love my guilty soul, and in Christ pardons all my sins, and justifies and blesses me; if I can live in the light of this love, I cannot but love others, however bad they are. The reflections of God's love shining in my heart will shine out in love to them. "*And there is none occasion of stumbling in him;*" nothing brings so much scandal on religion as any thing of selfishness or self-seeking in professing Christians; and it is remarkable what sharp eyes the world has, to spy out inconsistencies in Christians. But when the world sees the real disinterestedness and self-sacrifice of a child of God, they can find none occasion of stumbling in him, it does so adorn and commend the Gospel. It was thus our blessed Saviour won the hearts of his people, and thus should his people win the unconverted, to love and to serve the Saviour whom they follow.

11. *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and*

walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

We have a parallel expression in the Gospel of John xii. 35. Observe here how light and love are connected together; God is light, and God is love, and the invariable effect of true light in the understanding and heart, will be to produce love. All selfishness, self-preference and feelings of hatred to others, show that we are so far in darkness. In proportion as we lose sight of our brother, and prefer our own things to the things of Christ Jesus, and of our fellow-men, we are in darkness. Even where we cannot but hate the sins of others, towards their persons we are to feel nothing but love, seeking their highest and best good. He then that hateth his brother is in darkness. He may have a great knowledge of the letter of Scripture, and of the theory of Bible truth, and speak about his knowledge of the truth, but he has no light of God's love shining in his soul, no well-grounded assurance of salvation. "By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." He therefore knows not whither he goeth, nor is adequately conscious what shall be the issue of his present course. The evidence of belonging to Christ, and being among those who shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, is love, and not having this evidence, he walks in the darkness of sin, of ignorance and of trouble, and that an increasing darkness.

12. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

What a solemn introduction have we in this and the two following verses, to the command, *Love not the world.* All classes of christians are addressed according to their respective privileges; this verse, however, seems to be a general address to all Christians—the word here translated

little children, (τεκνια) is not the same as that so translated in the next verse. It is given to express the endearing relation by which all Christians are viewed by their Heavenly Father, even in the tender and affectionate spirit with which little children are viewed by their earthly parent. "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

"*I write* then *unto you because your sins are forgiven you.*" This is the common and grand privilege of all the children of God. Observe, they have sins; those sins want forgiveness, and they are forgiven, not on account of their being the children of God, but for his name's sake. Then observe, their sins do not throw them out of their adoption into the Divine Family, they are still accounted children. What a motive is this, not to carelessness and negligence, but to fear and love; "there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." The Gospel message is, "Be it known unto you that through this mind, is preached unto you forgiveness of sins:" the moment we believe this message, the forgiveness is ours, and we may be sure *our* sins are blotted out, and this is the position in which we ought to stand. Observe it is, "*for his name's sake:*" Jesus the Son of God, atoning for our guilt by his death, obeying the law in our stead. It is essential to see this distinctly, for if we look on any thing else for pardon, all comfort is gone and all holiness gone, we cannot then see the evil and danger, the ruin and abomination of sin. Notice the expression, "*I write unto you;*" the happiest ground for useful and delightful correspondence, and for union and oneness of mind in it, is to have correspondents whose sins are forgiven, and who are among God's children, and for such to dwell most of all on the things of Christ in their letters.

13. *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men,*

because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Here are three different classes addressed. Our Lord distinguishes them as the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. The great doctrine of different degrees of grace, according to our progress in the Christian life, runs through the Scriptures. So we read, "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord." A Christian is not to be a stunted tree, which grows no farther. The first stage mentioned is *little children.* (παιδια.) The views, the knowledge, the graces of a young Christian are all imperfect. There is the reality of spiritual life; he has received the new birth, and the new creation, but he is in a state of infancy and weakness; he looks much to others and is guided and directed by them. The infant has its most appropriate food in simple scriptural truth. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." If there be a real thirst after God's word, and a sucking in of its sweetness, day by day, the infant will gradually ripen into the maturity of the next stage. "*Young men*"—a very expressive term denoting the strength, vigour, activity, enlarging knowledge and zeal of this class. Thirdly, we have *the fathers* in Christ, denoting their lengthened experience, their knowledge of the emptiness of the world, their knowledge of false doctrines, and of the way in which Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and their enlarged insight into his many temptations. Observe what is particularly addressed to each class:—

"*I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning:*"—knowledge of Christ is so peculiarly the characteristic of the father, that it is repeated in the next verse. *Him that is from the beginning.* "In the beginning was the Word." As the Christian advances to maturity, he more and more forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth unto those that are

before, that he may *know Christ*, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, He looks off other things, that he may keep his eyes fixed on Christ: —Christ is his Alpha and Omega, his all in all.

"*I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.*" The young man in Christ has passed the stage of infancy, and got energy and courage in the Christian life, he is full of labours, and uses his strength for God, he has had many a battle with Satan, and has got the victory. The name given to Satan, "that *wicked one*," teaches us that he is eminently and emphatically, the wicked one, the father of lies, the great source and parent of the wickedness, rebellion, and eternal ruin of man. He is the antagonist and contrast to Christ, who is the *righteous one*; he tempts young men in various ways to forsake the paths of Christ, by vile thoughts, ensnaring lusts, or the pleasures of the world. You see the nature of his temptations by those with which he assailed our blessed Lord in the wilderness. This wicked one, young men in Christ have overcome. How? by the sword of the Spirit, Satan cannot stand that; Christ gave him thrust after thrust with that sword, and he fled away. This is our offensive weapon; then we have also defensive armour. We have the shield of faith, which quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one. The young man goes against Satan with the sword in his right hand, and the shield in his left hand, and so he baffles all the efforts of the tempter.

"*I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*" Children delight in their father, they know their father's heart, and their father's love, they rejoice in his care and protection; the first step then in the Christian life, is to know God as a Father, to have his Fatherly heart revealed to us; and so to learn in the spirit of adoption to cry, "Abba, Father."

14. *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known*

him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

We have here the repetition of what we have before stated. The variation in the tense may show, that the whole of the epistle is applicable to each class,—not only what "*I write*," but what "*I have written*." The reason for writing to the fathers is the same that was given before ; where I observe that scripture repetition is never tautology, though it be line upon line, precept upon precept ; it is needful and profitable for us. It shews here the weight and importance of the message.

"*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.*" We have here a variation, two additional reasons are given. First ye are strong ; it is important to know where Christian strength lies. He who is truly the young man in Christ, knows, that when he is weak, then he is strong, that without Christ he can do nothing, but that he is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him ; they that wait on the Lord gain strength, and they alone.

"*And the word of God abideth in you.*" Beautiful expression—no merely careless hurried reading of the Bible as a task, glad when it is over ; but "in his law doth he meditate day and night," everything bringing Scripture to the mind. Here is a great mark of growth in grace, from infancy to youth, to have the word of the Lord always before our minds, and occupying and mingling with all our thoughts.

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

This command comes after the statement, "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake ; ye have known him

that was from the beginning." In order to get the victory over the world, we must have a clear perception of our spiritual privileges in Christ. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith is the mighty antagonist principle, the spiritual power and strength, by which we may overcome the love of the world. The command is one continually repeated, "Be not conformed to this world." "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." "Come out and be ye separate." Great reason there is for the command; the whole world lieth in wickedness. The Scripture testimony is continually repeated, as to the contrariety of the world to God. The position of the Christian is that of one taken out of the ungodly world, and belonging to the little company of those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The great mass, even of the visible church, are going the broad road that leadeth to destruction. In the early church the case might be in some respects different. Joining the church was then attended with loss and ignominy, now it is a reproach not to belong to the visible church; but still it was true in the Jewish nation professing the religion of the Bible; "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." And it is too true now of Christendom at large. Here is a positive direction, *love not the world*,—love not, that is the sinful lusts and pleasures which are in the world; (for in one respect, as the world means our fellow-creatures, we are to love all men, knowing they are the creatures of God, and may yet become heirs of glory) but it means, love not the things which are in the world. There is abundant reason why we should not, seeing the world is under the power of Satan, and is the grand means by which he tempts us; the world passeth away and the lusts thereof; the time is short and we have eternal issues at stake, and everlasting interests to secure in so short a time.

"*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" The love of the world and the love of the Father, are two opposite affections which cannot subsist and rule together, it is like the statement in 2 Cor. vii. 14. "What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what communion hath light with darkness?" The love of the world is the love of earthly things, the love of the Father is the love of heavenly things. Besides, the more the world is pursued, the more it fills the soul, leaving no space for the love of God, for the affections are already pre-occupied. Let us now for a moment look at the love of the Father, as shed abroad in the heart of the Christian by the Holy Ghost. It is true that in him there are two natures, in him the fleshly nature goes after the world, but is mortified, resisted and crucified. He has known and believed the love which God has to him, he has risen up to the sublime and glorious state of being filled with love to the God of heaven and earth. He delights, he joys in God, his soul has there found a proper object on which to concentrate all its affections; he then finds that the love of the Father has an expansive power, which drives out that love of the world which is carnal, sensual, and devilish.

16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

From the time that Eve looked on the forbidden fruit, and saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; the chief temptations of the world have ever been presented to us under three aspects, pleasures, riches, and honours; these are the grand baits Satan employs to destroy us. Oh! if we could go down to the regions of everlasting woe and darkness, and pass from lost soul to lost soul, groaning there in agony and misery, there is not one but has taken one or other of these baits; not one but is in hopeless ruin

through these seductions of the enemy. Let us look at them more minutely :—"*The lust of the flesh*," or gluttony, drunkenness, impurity, self-indulgence ; the carnal pleasures by which Satan tempts us to neglect the commandments and will of God, that we may indulge in present gratification. "*The lust of the eyes*," all the varied forms of covetousness by which we desire gaiety, pomp, show, wealth, all that can attract the eye, but has nothing in it spiritual or heavenly. "*The pride of life*," all ambition, love of distinction or superiority over others. This evil is in all our hearts, and the whole Christian life is a struggle against it. It "*is not of the Father, but is of the world*." Here we have a very deep subject, the origin of evil, in which there is much that we cannot fathom or understand. The common excuse of unconverted hearts, and the whole system of Socialism, is founded on this notion :—'My evil dispositions are natural to me, I was born with them, I find every thing in this world to gratify them, why should I restrain them ?' But have you no understanding that they are evil ? Does not your conscience testify against them ? Are you not the creature of God ? Are you not bound to obey your Creator ? Would he give you a law which was not for your highest good, and which he would not assist you to obey ?

Doubtless on this subject, there is much that is beyond our thoughts ; but this we know, that "God hath made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions." Yielding to the temptations of Satan, he has perverted all things from their right use. The direction is now necessary, "*use* this world as not *abusing* it." God has indeed given us all things richly for enjoyment, but under laws which his infinite wisdom sees needful for our final happiness. The transgression of these laws is lust, which comes from our evil nature, and that evil nature, is derived from our first parents, who voluntarily chose to disobey God. Let no man therefore say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God ; the Father abhors all sin, and for six thousand years since Adam's fall, has been shewing the dreadful

consequences of that fall. And not only so, he has provided a full remedy, by which we may every one of us, if we will accept it, be delivered from our evil nature, and obtain a higher glory than Adam had before his fall. Here then is our condition ; the love of the Father and the love of the world ; the good that the Father can give, and the good that the world can give, are set before us. The awful responsibility is left to us, of choosing which we will follow and whom we will serve.

How infinitely needful for each of us, to obtain grace to choose aright ; it is a choice for eternity, and our only security is, to come to Christ, and believe in him ; " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God ?

17. *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.*

After having shewn the opposition between the love of the Father, and the love of the world, he proceeds to give a strong reason why we should choose the love of the Father; that the world can give but a temporary satisfaction, all its enjoyments are only for a transient period. We cannot enjoy both the world and God. God is a jealous God, he will not, he ought not, to endure a rival ; he has a just claim to the supreme place in all our affections. He has created us, to find our first happiness in himself alone, therefore love of the world must necessarily produce dissatisfaction and ruin. *And the world passeth away ;* the things that are seen, are temporal ; bye and bye the world, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up ; not annihilated but altogether changed. *Behold I make all things new.* The present state is merely a preparation for another; the school in which God's children are educated, preparatory to their royal state and glory in the world to come. Each day, each hour, is shortening the duration of the world, and with the world, its lusts of course pass away.

Those tormented in the lake of fire, have for ever done with the pleasures of the world—they long in vain for a drop of water to cool their parched tongue. The glorified saints in heaven have done with the pleasures of the world, they have found something far more satisfying and replenishing, their desire is to know more of the glory of God. Let us take to our hearts then, this solemn truth, that whether we please it or not, the world passes away and the lust thereof. How then shall we get permanent good? The apostle answers,

"*He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*" What is called 'the love of the Father' in the preceding verse, is here called doing the 'will of God.' Till you feel God's love to your own soul, you never will love God and seek to please him. To do the will of the Father then, is to have perfect confidence, that God has towards us a heart of intense and unutterable love, and therefore his commands are love, his requirements are love. It is to seek to know what God's will is, and when we know it, to bend our whole strength to fulfil it, whether it be in the way of submission or active exertion. It is to have God's will setting us to work, in all our daily duties, going through all, because he has commanded it; and he that thus doeth the will of God, abideth for ever: it does not say, is happy for ever, that follows of course on obedience, but "*abideth for ever.*" God is unchangeable; his will always endures, and thus is obtained that which is enduring, and passeth not away.

18. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time.*

The term little children, παιδια, is the same as in the thirteenth verse, and shews that this warning is suitable for the young in grace; they are especially exposed to antichristian temptations. How much have we seen of

the young thus misled in our days. Let the young be watchful. The term *last time*, refers on a large scale to the whole period intervening between Christ's first and second coming; but with a particular emphasis it refers to the close of that period, in the full development of Antichrist in the *last days*.

"*As ye have heard.*" St. John says they had heard this before, because the Old Testament scriptures notice it; we find it in the Psalms, in Isaiah, in the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel, in the wilful king in Daniel's prophecy. Our Lord speaks of it in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew; the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter, both probably written before that of St. John, bear continual allusions to it. The term Antichrist only occurs in the writings of St. John. It has two meanings, both of which help us to fix its application; first, it means a *vicar*, or *substitute* for one who is absent: secondly an *enemy or oppressor;* the first applying to the past history of Popery, the second to its last and final exhibition. We see a perfect type of it in Judas Iscariot; for three years outwardly professing to be a disciple of Christ, and preaching in his name, though a thief all along; and the same Judas, for the last three days, threw off the mask, and joined the enemies of Christ. "*Even now are there many Antichrists.*" —We find this referred to in Acts xx. 29, 30. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." In 1 Tim. i. 20. "Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." And in the third epistle of John, verse 9. "I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." In the account of Diotrephes, we have a perfect picture of Antichrist, loving the pre-eminence, lording it over God's heritage. I consider then the Popes of Rome to be emphatically the Antichrist, the man of sin: not one Pope in particular,

but the whole dynasty. I think it very probable, that this will be exhibited in the close, in a personal Antichrist openly opposing and resisting Christ. There are *many* Antichrists; how needful then to be very watchful over our own spirit, that we be not polluted by them! The character of the *little children*, is that they have known the Father; the character of the *fathers*, that they have known him that is from the beginning.

But in direct contrast to all this, Antichrist substitutes for the Father, saints and images, and all kinds of idolatries forbidden by God; and substitutes for the love and tenderness of Christ, the worship of the Virgin Mary; so that for one prayer offered to Christ, there are nine offered to the Virgin.

Hereby then, *we know that it is the last time*, for the Scripture has foretold, that this falling away is that which must precede the new and glorious dispensation of the kingdom and reign of Christ and his saints. The only thing, then, which now comes between us and the return of the Lord, is that last and open exhibition of that Wicked One, whom He shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

Here the apostle describes that departure from Christ, which marks Antichrist and his followers. It is distinguished by separation from the apostolic doctrine, and apostolic practice. The Roman Catholics apply this to us, of the Protestant Church. We in reply, say, that the Roman Catholics themselves have forsaken the doctrine of the apostles, and God himself has commanded us, "Come out of her, my people."

There is then a separation from a corrupt visible church,

which is necessary in order to keep to the apostolic doctrine and fellowship. It is very important to distinguish the true church from the apostacy; and the Holy Scriptures are the perfect touchstone to detect every counterfeit.

The statement of this verse is really descriptive of the apostacy of both the eastern and western churches; and when God opened the eyes of our Reformers to see this, they obeyed God's word in coming out of Babylon, into the fellowship and doctrine of the apostles. "*They went out from us*," therefore the apostacy was *within* the Christian Church. "*They were not of us.*"—In what sense? for they *were* of us by outward profession, by baptism, the church thought them of us? but they were not of us by sovereign election, by effectual calling, by the new birth of the Spirit, by holding the truth. They have the form of godliness indeed, but they deny the power of it. How does the apostle gather that they were not of us?

"*If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.*"—Here the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is made clear: he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Christ; so in Prov. iv. 18., and John x. 28, 29, this is made very plain. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"*They went out that they might be made manifest they were not all of us.*"—It pleases God thus to manifest to the world, even in this life, that in this Christian Church tares mingle with the wheat, all is not gold that glitters. But the great manifesting day is yet to come, which will shew who do, and who do not belong to Christ. Let us see then some of the practical lessons from this subject. First, make sure work in conversion; let it be clear that you are born again, then watch against the beginnings of a fall: What are they? Neglect of private prayer, and reading the Scriptures. When secret devotions are careless and formal, when they are hurried over as a task; when

we begin to read the Bible carelessly, it leads on to the neglect of the ordinances and ways of God, and so, step by step, men depart from him. Give your *best* time to God, and not the mere dregs of your time.

20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

We have the same truth in the twenty-seventh verse. Observe, our great security against apostacy, is having the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; this enables us to discern things that differ, and to keep and maintain the truth. This is brought out 1 Cor. ii. 15. and 2 Cor. i. 22. "*He that is spiritual discerneth all things.*" "*God hath anointed us, and sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*

"*Ye have an unction.*"—The allusion is to the anointing of prophets, priests, and kings, as a figure or sacrament of the gifts bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God, for the fulfilment of their sacred offices. In like manner, Christians have the anointing or unction of the Holy One, their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and this it is which makes the grand distinction between apostate and true Christians. It is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, which is our guide into all truth, and our guard against all error; here then is our great security.

This unction qualifies us for our offices as a royal priesthood, as teachers of others, dispensers of blessings to them, intercessors for them. These offices we hold in spirit now, and shall possess in full glory hereafter. The special end of this indwelling of the Spirit, is, that we may "*know all things*"—thus we are guarded against seduction. Under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we are wise to discern false teachers, we believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.

See then, my dear family, where your security is; not that you have been brought up in a religious family, not

that you have any superior discernment, or innate wisdom of your own. Your only preservative, from abounding error on every side, is, this sacred anointing. It is, when the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to you ; when he unmasks the errors of Satan, and shows them to be destructive and soul-ruinous ; when he enables you to keep close to the written word—then ye know all things : Not absolutely all, for the Christian's is a growing knowledge throughout eternity, but all things needful ; and observe, it is not said, the wise, the learned, the great, know all things ;—that by which we know all things is the unction of the Holy One, which is common to all : to the labourer or the pauper, as well as to the most learned theologian.

21. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*

Here closes that special address to the whole family of God, which begins in the 12th verse. Although those that know not the truth require the preaching of the Gospel, —"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,"—yet there is a special communion, comfort, and privilege, in writing to the children of God. Their great characteristic is that they know the truth. What is the truth ? It is contained in the whole word of God. Its substance is expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ ; all divine truth centres in him :—"This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This is the grand bond of union between all the children of God. Such being then the truth, I have written unto you because ye know it. When we already know the truth, we may know more ; however much of truth you may know, you have treasures of light and love and joy in it yet to ascertain.

"*And ye know that no lie is of the truth.*"—Is not this tautology ? No, there is a meaning in it, full of weighty in-

struction. It shews this, that the lie will be so dressed out by Satan, that people will believe it to be the truth. So it is with Popery—it comes to us with the claim of Holiness, Unity, Apostolicity, Catholicity; but the day is coming, when God will try every man's work of what sort it is, and nothing but God's truth will stand; let us then prove all things, and make the word of God our only ground of hope and confidence.

22. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.*

Having told us that Antichrist should come, and that "even now" are there many Antichrists, he proceeds to give the real character of Antichrist as *a liar*, having great pretensions to what is good, but it is all falsehood. His character as a liar is brought out in 2 Thess. ii, 9, 11. "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders." "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Here then we have the shortest description of Popery, *a lie*, something pretending to be the truth but really a falsehood. Lying is justified by Popery; perpetual tricks run through the whole system, not at all denying Christ in words, but making use of Christ to supplant Christ, giving over to the Virgin Mary and the saints, the glory due only to the Saviour. The whole spirit of Popery consists in putting something in the place of the Saviour as our confidence and joy, our righteousness and strength. In addition to this, instead of being taught to look at God as a God reconciling the world to himself in Christ, and so to have communion with God as a Father, we have in Popery the representation of a hard austere being to deal with; instead of Christ being the one Mediator, we have other Mediators to make Christ propitious. It is a perfect supplanting of all the grace and love of God to us sinners in Christ Jesus, and so is a true Antichrist.

23. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.*

"*Denieth the Son*"—the Socinians do this openly, denying the divine glory of Christ, as other heresies deny his humanity. And not only is there an open denial of Christ, but the setting aside of Christ's great atonement is the denying of the Son, as is done by those who would hide and reserve the doctrine of the atonement, and substitute masses, human observances, or our merits and good works. Popery is guilty of this spirit of denying the Son: denying Him in His divine glory, by bringing in saints as objects of worship, and in his human sympathy by putting the Virgin in his place—Whosoever thus denies Christ, this man cannot have the Father, that is, hold the acknowledgment of the Father. So you may see this in Mahomedanism, which says, "There is one God, and Mahomet is his prophet;" Have the Mahomedans got the Father? No: there is none of the tender grace, the purity, and the holy love of God our Father to be found in Mahomedanism; and so the Roman Catholics, who substitute the Virgin Mary for Christ, they have not the God of the Bible, but a God of fiction, of their own invention.

"*But he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*" This is not in the original, but it is put in italics, as some of the MSS. have it, and our translators considered it to be implied. You have the same truth expressed in chap. iv. 15,—it is very sweet to find that each sin and sentence of condemnation has an opposite duty and blessing brought forward. Let us ever remember, then, that a true and right confession of Christ is real possession of the Father, and let us never be ashamed of Christ.

24. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.*

Astonishing simplicity of language, with great depth of meaning, is the great characteristic of St. John, "*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*" Christians from the beginning have heard of God incarnate in our nature—dying for our sins—and here is the grand doctrine of Christianity. "I determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified:" "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh;" and this mystery is the grand centre, sum and substance of our faith. Therefore the rage of the devil is always directed against it, it is this which he has especially endeavoured to obscure through Popery.

"*Let this doctrine then which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you.*" It is the first truth which converts the heart of a sinner. However he may have been awakened by the terrors of the law, the truth that truly changes him is the doctrine of Christ. Well, then, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and that by private, prayerful, daily study of the Bible. I entreat you never, never neglect this. I speak from more than forty years experience, your soul will be sure to suffer loss, if any one day you wilfully neglect private reading of the Bible.

"*If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*" Here is the blessed recompense of daily drinking in those streams of living water. The three words in the text, "abide, remain, continue," are expressed in the Greek by the same word, showing the intimate connection between abiding in the word, and in the Father; I think it was Augustine who said "I view the word of God in two lights,—first as removing impediments to my fellowship

with God, and then as furnishing links to unite my soul with God." Oh the glory, the heavenly-mindedness, the full blessedness of this daily and hourly communion with God and his dear Son, here! Thus we have heaven begun below, Paradise already in a measure regained.

25. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

Where is this promise? I suppose this is to be taken in connection with our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus, "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but should have *everlasting life*," and with his enlargement on it in these words, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Oh how important it is to be divinely instructed in this, for Satan the father of lies, and our corrupt hearts, the natural ally of Satan, make us think religion wearisome and dull, Sabbath duties a task and burden, prayer and reading the Bible, a heaviness. Till the Holy Ghost gives us a truly converted heart, we shall not discern the excellence and blessedness of spiritual things, for "the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God." See, then, what eternal life is—to live in the light of God's presence, and the sweetness of His love. We can form some idea of what it is to live with those we love, to enjoy their converse, their affection and kindness; but to rise by this to communion with God, joy in Him, to enter into fellowship with the Father of our spirits, this is life eternal; to know as we are known, to see Him as He is, this is life eternal. This joy is altogether different from earthly joys, which are transitory, soon fading, uncertain and passing away; it is everlasting, it is satisfying—"in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Now see what life eternal is, begun now, perfected in glory. Observe the double

expression, *the promise which He hath promised us*, this is the way of the Bible—so in Isa. lv. 1.—"without money, and without price"—so, "justified freely by His grace." Observe then it is a promise promised; from first to last not merit but promise, not a reward due to our goodness, but coming from God's love.

26. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.*

The promise of eternal life, so fully given in the preceding verse, is the grand security against Anti-christian delusions. If we get a firm hold of this, that we have eternal life in Christ Jesus, let Satan come with his delusions, we have a shield against him. The Apostle is, I apprehend, still speaking to the *little children*, those young in the Christian life being especially exposed to delusion. Take, for instance, the Tractarian or semi-popish delusion; from my own knowledge I can say that hardly any of the old Evangelical Clergy or laity have been led away by it; it has been the young, who have not had deep experience in the things of God, or deep acquaintance with the temptations of Satan. Therefore, what need, my dear children, you have, to be watchful and prayerful, renouncing your own wisdom, and taking God's word as your guide; for if in the time of the inspired Apostle, Satan was impudent enough to seduce souls from Christ, how much more now, when we have only the written word to refer to.

27. *But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth

in you."—Observe the guard against seduction is, the promise of eternal life in the Word on the one hand, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost on the other; these two together form our effectual guard. This anointing *abideth.* "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that He may *abide with you for ever.*" This is a precious truth. There are three marks of this anointing, faith, hope, and love; where these are given to a man, there is the anointing which abideth, for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." What a blessed doctrine this is, amid all our weakness and infirmities, that where Christ gives the unction of the Holy One, it is an *abiding* gift.

"*And ye need not that any man teach you.*"—This is according to the promise of the New Covenant, they shall not teach every man his neighbour, or every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord,—for all shall know me, from the least, even unto the greatest of them." It does not mean, that the believer who has the gift of the Holy Ghost does not need the constant instruction of God's ministers, but that he has the inward teaching of the Spirit, corresponding to the outward teaching, and confirming it; so that he receives it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God. And however we may, in God's providence be separated from a faithful ministry, the Holy Ghost is such an effectual teacher through the word, that you will sometimes find most devoted servants of God, who have had but few outward privileges, and are mourning for the want of them.

"*And as the same anointing teacheth you all things.*" This is like that promise, "He shall guide you into all truth." There is no part of Divine truth, on which we do not want the teaching of the Holy Spirit: the Bible is the treasury of all truth, but the just application of that treasure to our souls, is from the Spirit of truth. How important then to pray for this Divine teaching.

"And is truth, and is no lie."—Here we can discern what the anointing is, *it is truth*—truth, first in the Scriptures

and then brought thence by the Spirit into the mind, and the heart, and so into the life. Then, *it is no lie*—the Pope's decrees are lies, the world's lusts are lies, but this teaching is no lie; not a glory for a day, which a puff of wind will blow out; but a glory for eternity, which will stand the last tempest.

"*Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.*"—We abide in the Holy Ghost, and He in us, inseparably through eternity; how well Christ teaches us that the sum of all good things is the Holy Ghost. Mat. vii. 11. Connected with his corresponding promise, "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

28. *And now, little children, abide in Him, that, when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

I connect this with verse twelve, from the expression "little children," being the same from doing both. He resumes then the address to the whole family of God—"*I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake; and now, little children, abide in him;*" in the feeling and conviction then, of forgiven sin, abide in Jesus. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; abiding in a sense of the love of Jesus in forgiving all our iniquity, living in the light of that love, and so having communion and fellowship with Christ, we dwell in Him and He in us. "*Abide in Him.*" The same charge which the venerable apostle had himself sixty or seventy years before heard from his divine Master, "abide in me and I in you."

"*That when he shall appear.*"—Notice how the doctrine of the Second Advent comes continually in the Epistles, as a matter of course, as a thing to be cordially believed and reasoned on; so in Col. iii. 4, 5—"When Christ, who is

our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth," and 1 John iii. 2—"We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," when he shall appear, or when he shall be manifested. He is really present now at this moment, with us, who are met in His name: but to be manifested is another thing—that will be a visible, personal, sensible appearance of Christ when he comes with clouds, visible to every eye: this is a thing to be longed for and delighted in.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our God and Saviour."—This is the grand end and object of all our labours, hopes, and desires. The great question then is,—How may we be accepted and blessed, and have joy and confidence before Him? We have the answer before us, *abide in Him*. And oh! to have this confidence, that when the whole ungodly world is in nothing but terror and dismay, we shall be able to look to his appearance as our best hope: this, then, is worth all the sacrifice and exertion we can give. What then is the time when we may look for His appearing? In my view, the scriptures lead us to the conclusion that we are not far from the coming of Christ, and most likely the younger members of my family will actually behold the return of the Lord. We cannot indeed tell the year or the precise time, but we have scriptural evidence that it is now near at hand; and all our thoughts, words, and works, should have reference to the question, "How shall we stand before Him at His coming?" God's children are viewed here in two lights—first, as having confidence, and then, as not being ashamed.

First, then, they *have confidence*—such confidence as makes it a most desirable event to us; such confidence as we find in Isaiah xxv. 9. "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us." What a blessed state of mind this is! when every symptom of the return of the Saviour (and there are many—such as the interest

taken about the Jews, the wide-spread preaching of the Gospel, the chronological prophecies coming to a close) is to us a symptom of joy! when we joy in thinking, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand,"—soon shall we stand before Christ, soon we shall see his face, and be with him for ever! But again, another point is, *not to be ashamed before Him.* Many will be ashamed in that day. Daniel says, "Some shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt;" our Lord declares, "Whoso shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed at his coming." The folly of these will be manifest unto all men; they will in the end count themselves fools—"We fools counted his life madness." Now they find they have lost the golden opportunity of gaining eternal life, and escaping the flames of hell; they are lost, irrecoverably lost for ever, here is the portion of the wicked. The children of God are delivered from this shame, and this includes their being raised to the height of glory and blessedness.

See then how the case stands, we must be content to undergo contempt and shame and ridicule now, then everlasting glory and honour will be ours; on the other hand if we will prefer the smile of man, the favour of the world, the honour that comes from man, we shall get it, we shall have our reward; men are not commonly disappointed in seeking man's favour—but how shall we stand before Christ, when He appears, and his judgment, before which all sinners must bow down, is passed on us for eternity! Oh let us all flee from the wrath to come.

29.—*If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

It is remarkable that in speaking of the Supreme Being there is sometimes such a generality of expression in the Scriptures, that we cannot tell whether Christ or the Father is meant. This may be another mark of the Divine glory of Christ, and the truth of what He says, "I and

my Father are one." From the preceding verse here, we might suppose Christ to be referred to ; but from the expression "*born of him.*" I apprehend it refers to the Father. "*He is righteous,*" a glorious view of God, comprehending all His moral perfections, His holiness, truth, mercy, goodness, justice, every thing in which God displays His moral beauty and loveliness. Believers then have come to know that He is righteous. If we look upon the world at large, many things seem contrary to this. God is the Sovereign ruler of the world, who governs all things, yet we see on every side, wickedness triumphant, and God's people oppressed. But the Christian has a key to all this, he looks at the judgment to come, and the eternal issues of what is now taking place, and thus he comes to the solid conviction that God is altogether good ; and says with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?" If then *ye know* that He is righteous, ye know (or as it is in the margin, *know ye*) that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. This marks even the character of the justified man ; it is that sanctification which is the invariable issue of his justification by grace, and inseparable from it. Here then is a simple mark of a genuine Christian,—*He doeth righteousness ;* real grace always works in that way ; this is the constant tendency of the Christian's whole soul and spirit, he had rather die than deliberately do wrong. It is not the favour of friends or worldly advancement or pleasure that is his great aim in life, but in everything to please God. This great change has been wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, he has had that vital inward change which the Scriptures make so absolutely essential, that not one soul shall enter heaven which has not been born again ; "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." This dashes to pieces all notions of identifying baptism and vital regeneration ; for, go into all the depths of profanity and wickedness in our land, and whom do you find ? Baptized Christians ! are they vitally regenerate ? "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither

is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." So it is in the Gospel. He is *not a Christian which is* one outwardly—he is a Christian which is one inwardly. Baptism is the sign, and a means of regeneration, but it is very often unblessed with the inward vital change, which is absolutely essential to your salvation.

CHAPTER III.

1. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

After having shown that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God, and as such is entitled to the glorious character of a child of God, and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," he attracts our attention to that wonderful privilege, by a burst of surprize, admiration, delight and gratitude.

"*Behold!*" seeing the righteous God has given us the new birth unto righteousness, though we were dead in trespasses and sins, behold what manner of love is this! See, he traces all up to the love of God, as the original fountain-head; "in His love and in His pity he redeemed us." Now love regards not the merits and claims of the object, so much as the workings of its own inward feelings towards that object. There is, then, intense original love in the heart of God toward us his creatures; He has a far deeper interest in us, than parents have in their children, or children have in their parents. He has created us, he daily sustains us, he has placed us in this world; these things might show the greatness of His love toward us; but we have a more striking exhibition of it, in that after

we had rebelled against, and forgotten, and forsaken Him, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" but this is not all, we find a still fuller and more intense love in his grace to his people. Notwithstanding our rejection of all His love, He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, called us by his Spirit, and new created our souls to be His children.

This is the love which St. John here speaks of, and truly what manner of love it is! it surpasses all our ideas of love, surpasses them in its freeness, its fulness, its origin, its eternal duration, and the effects it produces. It is an overwhelming, astonishing love.

"*Which the Father hath bestowed upon us.*" &c. Observe the freeness of the gift; this takes away all merit or goodness on man's part, man does not even desire it by nature, it is not man's choice but God's choice. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

"*That we should be called.*" Call ourselves, and be called by others, and be found to be, and in every way be acknowledged as, the children of God. Children by regeneration, children by adoption, children as heirs of the eternal inheritance, children as under teaching and education for that inheritance, children as those that shall never be cast out. This my dear family, is a thing to know and feel and enjoy day by day: *behold* this love, think not the privilege too great to be possessed, think not it will fill you with pride, it will fill you with humility; the joy of the Lord shall be your strength, walk in the light of this love. Here then is the great and wonderful privilege to which we are called, and very wonderful too is the grace of God, that from our earliest infancy, we are brought by baptism, into the bonds of the covenant, and have the privileges of this state promised to us, being made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; all to be realized through living faith in Christ. But the world, that same world of which he has often spoken, "love not the world,"—that world which in outward privilege may be members of Christ, and children of God,

but that world which in a far deeper sense shews it is not truly born of God, by not rising to the character of the children of God, "doing righteousness:"—this world knoweth us not, it cannot discern our privileges, and does not acknowledge them. The world has never tasted that the Lord is gracious, never felt the load of guilt and sin, never fled for refuge to the hope set before us, never known the comfort of pardon, the joy of hope, the sweetness of love, so that we always find the world has some nick-name or other for the Christian, as "enthusiast, fool, madman," or else it takes some precious name, and turns it into scorn; "These are your *saints*, your *elect!*" for it realizes not the real character of a Christian or his glorious privileges; if it did, it could not continue its vain grovelling pursuits.

There is one reason given in particular, why the world knoweth us not, "*because it knew Him not;*" and here we have brought out the inseparable union and likeness between Christ and His people; there is such an identity, such a conformity to Christ in his true disciples, that it brings forth the same enmity from the world toward them as toward Christ;—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." The world finds in the Christian the mind and character of Christ: Is Christ meek and lowly? so is the believer; is Christ holy and full of love? so is the believer; is Christ valiant for the truth and testifying against error? so is the believer;—he treads in the steps, and follows the example of Christ. What effect then upon the world had the appearance of Christ on our earth? He had many glories which man has not, He spake as never man spake, He wrought mighty miracles, He was not the adopted, but the only-begotten Son of God, yet the world knew him not, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The world may talk, and talk justly of our faults and inconsistencies, but Christ had none, yet the world knew Him not; and the disciples of Jesus must be as their master, therefore we must expect and count on the scorn

of the world ; it is the cross we have to bear, on the way to everlasting glory.

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

If a Christian say this before the world, what audacity, what presumption, it is supposed to be. But the doctrine of assurance scripturally held, is a most holy, delightful, and heavenly doctrine ; it is a root of all true reverence, love and obedience, and the spring of entire consecration to God. The Christian gathers his assurance from two sources among many others : the works of righteousness, which, as born of God, he is enabled to perform ; and the hatred and scorn which such works bring upon him. Think of the word "*beloved*," and see what love there should be among Christians ; they are children of the same family, they are taking up the same cross, going through the same difficulties.

"*It doth not yet appear what we shall be ;* the sons of God are now burdened with affliction, weighed down with the body of sin and death, distressed by the fiery darts of Satan, sowing in tears, crying out "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" for it doth not yet appear what we shall be. The seed is at present under ground, apparently dying rather than vegetating, and it is thus hidden from the world, which has no idea of the privileges and glory belonging to Christians : which looks upon religion as a duty at best, or generally as a task and burden, necessary to be taken up in order to avoid eternal ruin, but affording no pleasure or advantage. Yet there is even now, no real happiness to be found but in religion ; if we want to live in paradise here below, we must enter into the spirit of the gospel. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Then as to the future ; "*we know that when He shall ap-*

pear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The return of our Heavenly Master, is throughout the scriptures the great object of hope set before us. There is then a real personal manifestation of our blessed Redeemer, visible to our senses, yet to take place. *Now* by faith we have a spiritual view of His excellence and glory ; *then* we shall see him face to face, and *we shall be like Him* : a twofold likeness. Likeness in body to Christ as He appeared on the mount of transfiguration. Our body now, is a body of humiliation ; "sown in weakness" is its present description. Whatever health or strength we may have, it is weakness itself compared with what we shall have, when our body shall be for ever free from all infirmity, defect, toil, sickness, and weariness, and made unspeakably beautiful and glorious. But this is not all, we shall be like Him in spirit also—"then shall I be satisfied, when I awake up after thy likeness." Now there is a continual conflict between the flesh and the spirit, owing to the remains of sin and corruption. Though in the Christian the new man waxes stronger and stronger, and the old man weaker and weaker, to the last gasp of life we are actual sinners, and can depend only on the Lord Jesus for pardon and justification. Then all this temptation and sin shall be ended ; the understanding, the memory, the affections, the will, shall be renewed after the image of Christ. This we know, for He has promised it ; we have the earnest and foretaste of it now ; as surely as He has given grace, so surely will He give glory. This assurance then is not presumption but faith, not rashness, but knowledge.

Observe next the reason given—"*For we shall see Him as He is.*" What a glorious thought is this! Oh! to see our best benefactor, whom we have never yet beheld with our bodily eyes ; to catch a glimpse of His glory, and not a glimpse, but a gaze ; not a gaze, but a perpetual vision of Him and abode with Him ; ever with the Lord who has thus loved us, ever with Him who has done us good all our lives, and brought us to share his glory! Now we know in part, then we shall know even as we are known. Now we

often mistake His dealings ; " What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Then we shall see the deepest love, in what at the time seemed hardly consistent with love, or the very opposite of love. Then observe the transforming efficacy of this love, " FOR *we shall see Him*, &c." The image of Christ in us shall be complete, no part shall be dark, but we shall reflect altogether His beauty and glory : because of the transforming power of the full blaze of his glory upon our own souls.

3. *And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*

First, we observe here the hope in Jesus. So the apostle tells the Colossians, of the wonderful mystery of the gospel among the Gentiles, which is " Christ in you the hope of glory." Christ is our only hope : His return is that blessed hope for which his people are looking. When He shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory ; here is our hope. This hope is to be a possession,—we are to have it. Every body does not possess it, the great mass of mankind reject it, and have only that hope of the hypocrite which shall perish. Hope is given to believers by the Holy Ghost. We abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Oh, what a blessed grace it is ! hope is the most lively and joyful grace which the Christian has, it is the helmet whereby we lift up the head in the day of battle : it is the anchor which keeps us stedfast in the raging of the last storm. The property of this hope is to purify the soul. If I hope to dwell with Jesus for ever, to be like Him, to see Him as He is, I shall try now to get meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. This hope leads us to the fountains of purity ; what are these ? There are various fountains,—the blood of Jesus is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness ; the living waters of the Spirit purify the heart from the lust, pollution, love, and dominion of sin ; God's word is spoken

of as a fountain, Eph. v. 26. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Baptism typifies this cleansing, and realizes it to believers; but the chief way in which a Christian purifies himself day by day, is by coming to the Father's love, the Saviour's blood, and the Spirit's grace. Thus we purify ourselves "*even as He is pure*," for nothing else will satisfy the soul, which hungers and thirsts after righteousness till it be filled. Observe the present tense, "*purifieth*"—it is a constant thing, to the end of our lives; the soul contracting daily, as the body, fresh filth and impurity from contamination with the things of the world, and needing daily to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

4. *Whoso committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.*

After describing the rich privileges of the Christian, the Apostle comes now to consider the contrast truths. The Christian is not without law to God, but under the law to Christ. While delivered from the guilt and condemnation of the broken law, he is not left in a lawless state, and it is very important, that we Protestants should see this clearly. We who glory in justification by faith through grace, to whom was given at the Reformation the unspeakable privilege of discerning the gospel of the grace of God in its freeness and fulness, should guard against the natural tendency of the human heart to abuse this grace and become careless and negligent. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and when we are brought to Christ, though no longer under the condemning power of the law, we are not in a licentious state, to do what we please, but are made to delight in the law of God after the inward man. The law, as the *rule* of life, is as important as the Gospel, as the way of

life. The gospel gives life, the law shows us how to exercise that life. Observe that expression, *committeth*—it does not mean whoso falleth into sin through the force of temptation and corruption—for if any man say he has no sin he deceiveth himself, nor is there a single day in which we do not all offend in many things. But these short-comings are our burden and grief, they are against the purpose and will and judgment of the believer. To will is present with him, but how to perform that which is good he too often finds not. The expression here signifies *worketh*, one whose course and habit is one of sin. No Christian can live in this habitual, willing, wilful sin; he loathes and abhors the thought of wilfully doing wrong, his sin is his grief, and trouble, and burden, from which he longs to be delivered. The distinction then is very important—he who committeth sin "*transgresseth also the law*," or he works lawlessness. Here comes the important point, that sin is lawlessness, and he who gives to his lusts and corruptions the sway over him, proves that he is a member of the lawless one, and has cast off the restraints of God's law. Lawlessness is a special danger of the last times. This corruption of an empty profession of the gospel without its purity and sanctity, its self-denial and love, was doubtless one of the causes which gave occasion to the opposite error of Tractarianism. But the true end of the gospel is to lead us to delight in the law.

5. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin.*

After having shown that the Christian cannot go on in sin, the Apostle proceeds to show the great doctrine of the removal of sin by the manifestation of Jesus,—"*Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.*" So St. Paul says, "He gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity." First, it seems to bring before us our redemption, and the glorious life of faith into which we are

brought, by believing that redemption. Faith credits the truth that He was made sin for us, and thus, being brought into the glowing light of divine love, believing all that love to us without any work of ours: righteousness is imputed to us, and then we rise to the farther blessing of righteousness imparted; justification leading to sanctification. It is absolutely essential, my dear family, to your holiness, that you should see your free salvation by Christ Jesus. The joy of the Lord is your strength, and it is only as you are brought to know that you are saved by grace, through faith, not of works, that you can do any good works at all. "Do we make void the law through faith? nay, we establish the law." How then was Jesus manifested? There was a twilight manifestation before His coming; Abraham saw his day and was glad. But when He became incarnate, when God was manifest in the flesh, when the sacrifice was completed, and our sins borne in His own body on the tree, then emphatically He was manifested, and men were called upon to "behold the Lamb of God."—"*In him is no sin*," the more we look upon the manifested love of the Lord Jesus, and see his pure and spotless character, tempted as we, yet without sin, the more we shall see the perfection and the beauty of his character in every thing, and seek conformity to his image, and rejoice in the thought, that "when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

6. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

See the inseparable connection between abiding in Jesus, and deliverance from sin. So in John xv. 4., "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." We have the same truth in another aspect, where abiding in Jesus is illustrated by the union between the branch and the vine—the branch has fibres from

the parent tree, and by them are drawn out from the tree, sap and life, beauty and usefulness. This is the picture of a Christian's life ; the fibres which unite him to Jesus, are constant faith and prayer, and meditation upon his love, as revealed in his word. So he receives from Jesus the gift of the Holy Ghost, spiritual life and strength, and becomes fruitful in every good word and work. My dear family, this must be your own individual experience, you must cast your sin on Jesus. He must give his righteousness to you, if you would abide in Him ; and mark the term "*abide ;*" not a single act, but a life of faith ; whosoever then does thus abide in him, be he English or French, European or American, African or Asiatic, of whatever name, order or nation, if he really holds the head and loves Christ, he is a child of God.

"He also *sinneth not.*"—This is a strong expression, especially when we remember that in the first chapter, the Apostle had said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." But "*sinneth*" here means the same as in the ninth verse of this chapter, that is, he doth not go on in a course of sin. He cannot be a drunkard, cannot be a hypocrite, cannot be a swearer : true, he unwillingly sins each day and hour, and continually falls short of the glory of God, but this is through the infirmity of his flesh and against the will of his spirit. He delights in the law of God after the inward man, though the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. See then this distinction between the sins of an unconverted, and those of a converted man.

"*Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen Him, neither known Him.*"—Observe ! the sight and knowledge of Jesus, is the death of sin. So when the Jews, as a nation, shall look on Him whom they have pierced, sin will receive its death-blow in them. Our grand aim then, should be, first to "*see*" Jesus by a living faith ; to see him as made known in His word, His children, His ordinances, and every figure and representation given of Him by types and shadows as set forth in the Scriptures ; to see Him where-

ever He is to be discerned; and so we must follow on to know the Lord, and daily increase in that knowledge, and learn more of that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness, is righteous even as He is righteous.*

In this and the following verse, we see the two classes distinctly marked out by their conduct, and thus the most effectual guard is put on the doctrines of grace and a free salvation. St. John had spoken in chap. ii. 26., of those that seduce you. There has ever been a vast host of deceivers, headed by Satan the arch-deceiver, the father of lies. And there is now abroad a peculiar power of these evil spirits of deception, unclean spirits like frogs, seeking to deceive and to destroy—the evil spirits of Popery, Infidelity, and Lawlessness. There is a very great danger of deception on all sides. Why does the Apostle use the phrase, "*little children!*" perhaps because little children credit every thing that is said to them, and believe all that they hear. There is a simplicity about little children, which leaves them specially exposed to deception. Therefore we are told to "be men of understanding, howbeit in malice to be children."

"*He that doeth righteousness, is righteous.*"—He is not thus *made* righteous, but it *proves him* to be righteous—How, then, is he made righteous? What is the first step? By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other possible way for a sinner to be made righteous. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Then, being thus made righteous, he proves that he is righteous by doing righteousness. He is brought into a state of reconciliation with God, his heart is open to love God, and to love man, and he abounds in all the fruits of righteousness; so that if we have not these fruits, we have no evidence before man, and no satisfactory evidence to ourselves that we are made righteous.

"*Even as he is righteous.*"—What a glorious truth this is! We have not only all the righteousness of Christ put upon us; "Ye are complete in Him:" we have also the progressive righteousness of sanctification imparted to us, becoming more and more like Jesus, having His spirit and mind, day by day, more and more, formed and created in us. How full of truth is this simple passage of God's word!

8. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

How plainly and distinctly the practice of wickedness proves the real fatherhood of the wicked. What is the devil? A fallen and apostate spirit, once an angel of light in glory, who fell by pride, and became first the seducer of innumerable angels, and then the tempter of man, and the author of all our woe and misery. There is then a Satanic being who hates us, and there is a constant war to be maintained by the believer against him, and the fallen spirits who work under him.

"*But he that committeth or worketh sin is of the devil.*" How St. John the beloved disciple imbibes the spirit, and gathers up the sayings of his master! these are almost the very words our Lord himself had used in speaking to the Jews, John viii. 44—"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." These words might, to a careless, thoughtless reader, appear very severe and harsh, but it was really the truest and fullest kindness to awaken them to a sense of their real condition.

"*He that worketh sin.*"—If we see a man going on in a course of worldliness, his heart set only on worldly things, and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; thinking only of what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed: that man is of the devil, the real spirit that inspires him is Satan.

"*For the devil sinneth from the beginning: for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*" The devil was the first sinner, and that when he dwelt among angels and archangels in the glory of heaven. Then filled with pride, as we suppose, he seduced innumerable angels who fell with him; thus he became the parent of sin. The very end for which the Son of God, our blessed Saviour, left his Father's bosom, and became "God manifested in the flesh," was to destroy the works of the devil. What a comfort this may be to His people: Whenever they feel any rising of sin in their hearts, they may remember,—the Son of God was manifested to destroy this work of the devil; whenever they are distressed at the prospect of death, they may know, the Son was manifested to destroy this work of the devil; death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, and God shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Oh! let us often, in fervent prayer, use this blessed truth as a plea with God, that by his help, we may obtain victory over the devil.

9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

The Holy Scriptures, in directly stating one great truth, often seem for a moment to lose sight of the contrast truth. So St. Paul seems to lose sight of works as the evidence of our justification, and St. James seems to lose sight of justification by grace. We have need therefore, of a full, comprehensive view of God's truth.

From the present verse, for instance, a large body of faithful Christians have adopted the idea of a sinless perfection, attainable by man while yet on earth. We have need to look, not at parts of truth merely, but at every part of truth. We must look in this verse at the force of the expressions; to commit sin, to practise iniquity, is

contrary to the course and habits of a Christian. When he falls into sin, it is his grief, and he rises again, and renews the battle.

Notice the expression, "*born of God.*"—There is a certain class, who insist upon the sameness of baptism and regeneration; and declare that all who are baptized, are born of God. But such flatly contradict this passage of St. John, as illustrated by the actual state of the baptized among us.

We see those who have been baptized, going on in the grossest sin, but *he that is born of God doth not commit sin;* what is it then to be born of God? It is to have a supernatural work on our hearts by the power of His Spirit, giving us new hearts and new spirits, so that we being dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened together with Christ. Here is the grand vital change, the death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness, which distinguishes the children of God from the children of the world. Whoever has experienced this change, does not work sin: if he had lived in any sin before, he is perpetually striving against that sin; the thief will become honest, the drunkard sober, the fornicator pure, the profane holy, and the liar will become perfectly true.

The sinner will undo all he had sinfully done, "*for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" That is explained in 1 Peter i. 23; "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever;" to be the seed of God's word. Whether it is explained to mean the literal inspired word, or Christ Himself, it comes to much the same effect. Many of the characters of Christ are frequently transferred to His word, where they are made known and reflected. "*He cannot sin,*" &c. *Cannot,* that is, so as to delight in and choose sin, for it has become his aversion, he has learnt to detest it; see, then, a holy life is the true evidence of the new birth.

10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

You see how distinctive the marks of real religion are, not those in which we place it; not in belonging to this church or that church; not in outward things. The line which God takes is far more permanent and important, far more marked and decided. It is, whether a man is doing righteousness or not; and in the day of judgment, the same great test discriminates between the sheep and the goats.

"*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil,*" While men make thousands of names and divisions, God divides them into two classes only—the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. The children of God are those who are born of God, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The children of the devil are those, who though invited in ten thousand ways to come to Christ, yet remain in their natural fallen state, preferring Satan's service and dominion. Here then are the two great families into which mankind is divided. True it is, all the children of God were by nature the children of wrath, and many of his children yet to be called may still be in that state, but here is manifested the mighty power of Jesus, that He has proved Himself stronger than the strong man armed, and has divided the spoil with the strong, and rescued His people from the grasp of Satan.

A second mark of the children of God is, that they love the brethren; they view every human being as a brother, and view the children of God especially as brethren. Let us seek to grow in this love. We may indeed, and ought to, have a preference for the particular church to which we belong, from a well-weighed and fixed judgment concerning it; yet it is not this which marks us as the children of God, but doing righteousness and real works of love. The day

is coming when all other distinctions will vanish, but the distinction between the children of God, and the children of the devil. Oh, my family, make sure work here. Believe in Jesus to your everlasting salvation.

11. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

The apostle now proceeds to tell us that the religion of love has been declared from the beginning.

It is the grand principle brought out in all the law of God, from the beginning ; that law which Cain first violated, when he entertained envy and hatred against his brother, and then slew him. The grand principle of the law of Moses is, " Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." This is expanded in the ten commandments. This is the message, emphatically God's message to man ; so our blessed Saviour says, " This is my commandment, that ye love one another." There is nothing so commended in the word of God as love. The Scriptures throughout largely dwell on it. St. James says, " All the law is fulfilled in one word : that is *love*." We must fight against error then in the spirit of love," because those who are in error are destroying themselves and others. If we fight against error in a mere party spirit, to defend principles because we have professed them, and therefore cannot bear to be opposed ; if love be not our animating principle, our earnest zeal against error may be nothing but party zealotry, and bigotry, full of evil. God is love even to his worst enemies ; there is a depth and glory of love in all his dealings with everything he has made, and God, in His overflowing love, would have every other being overflow with love too. It appears from our text, as if the love of God were to bear, all along, a message character,—it is to go from heart to heart, from lip to lip, from generation to generation, till the joyful sound fills

the earth, and all have heard the message ; and love is the governing principle of the world.

12. *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him ? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

After dwelling on this beautiful message,—"love one another," the apostle comes to consider the contrast spirit of the world, out of which the Christian has been delivered. "*Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one ;*" he was partaker of the spirit and character of the wicked one, and possessed by his power. When we yield to sin we open the door for the devil to come and sit in our hearts, and reign over, and govern our whole souls. "*Wherefore slew he him ?*" simply because "*his works were evil, and his brother's righteous ;*" and this is the cause now of the hatred the world bears to the godly. The more godly we are, the more we love God and love man, the more the world will hate us, and in return for seeking their highest and best good, we shall incur their wrath and malice and envy. Let us not then judge of truth, by the favour it has among men, but take the word of God as our only standard, counting the cost, and knowing that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, for darkness cannot bear the light, and the evil cannot bear the good. Our position is, to be returning kindness, forbearance, long-suffering and pity for their enmity, not overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

See here the direct opposition of the world against Christians—we have in love to those around us, to testify against their worldliness, wickedness and neglect of God. It would be cruelty, it would be wickedness in us to be silent.

Our Lord has told us that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The daily course and conduct of the Christian is very offensive and provoking to the world; it hinders their comfortable enjoyment of their sins. Many things may prevent the hatred of the world from breaking out, yet there it is, and that in opposition to all the love of the christian. This is sometimes very surprising to the believer; he is ready to say "How have I provoked this enmity? I have done nothing but good to them, yet they hate me." Marvel not, my family. Look at all the saints of God who have gone before, at Elijah, at Micaiah, at Daniel, nay, at our Lord himself; and learn not to be turned from your course of shewing love to your enemies, and acting a Christian part towards them, notwithstanding their enmity and hatred.

14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

Many great truths are brought before us here; first observe the transition from death to life, that all-important change elsewhere called regeneration, or the new birth. All men are represented in the Scriptures as in a state of spiritual death. The sentence pronounced upon Adam, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," has been fulfilled, and we are now by nature dead in trespasses and sins. The change, then, of passing from death to life is absolutely essential; it is described John v. 24—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life." We may have an assurance, and know certainly if this change has passed upon us—how? if we love the brethren. This is a very precious evidence, and one that will often comfort a child of God, when other evidences are obscured. The true Christian will have a real love to all men, but a

special love to the children of God ; and in proportion as he sees the image of God reflected in a man, and that he is really doing the will of our Heavenly Father, he will feel his heart drawn out towards that man, and will prove the reality of his love, by loving him through all his infirmities.

"*He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*" Observe, there is no neutral ground, nor middle state between life and death. The Scriptures view the whole of mankind as children of wrath, or children of God, and the great discriminating mark we have here is, love to the brethren. "*His brother,*" is more properly rendered "the brother." I consider that it has a special reference to all the children of God. Want of love then to the children of God, is a mark of spiritual death, and a very affecting mark it is, for upon the children of God there is stamped the Divine image, they love God and love man ; they hate sin, and love holiness ; the different graces of the beatitudes are stamped upon them.

Now, he who has no delight in these things, no pleasure in the graces which the Holy Spirit has thus imparted to sinful creatures, but rather hates the children of God for their righteousness, has a mark in his own soul, that he is dead in trespasses and sins ; he has no feeling after God, no sense of the eternal things that are passing around him. The Lord evermore preserve us from this state, and enable us to love the brethren in Christ Jesus, wherever we may find them.

15. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

St. John catches the Spirit of his beloved Lord. In Matt. v. 21, we have the same sentiment by our Lord Himself. "Ye have heard how it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill : and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that

whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." He who searches the heart and tries the spirit sees the first beginning of murder is, hatred in the heart; and God, who is a Spirit, stamps the name of the sin on its first beginning. How very careful then, we should be, not to let this hatred enter our bosom! But we must discriminate here, it is a righteous duty to hate that which is evil. God, who is love itself, expresses his hatred of the workers of iniquity, and again and again foretels the heaviest judgments upon them, and this that they may be turned from their evil ways. So David says, in Psalm cxxxix. 21—"Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" That is, so far as they hate God, they are righteous objects of our hatred. But while we hate their evil deeds, and testify against them, we must not hate them personally, but desire and seek their best good. "*Whoso hateth his brother*," has rooted ill will to him, so as to wish real evil to him, so as, for instance, to desire his everlasting destruction, is a murderer; if such a man's sin had its full growth, it would issue in the murder of his brother's soul and body.

"*And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*" The Apostle does not say, no murderer may attain eternal life. See the reverse of this, in David, and in Saul of Tarsus—but the Apostle shews that the spirit of hatred is as clear an evidence that we have not eternal life, as loving the brethren is a mark of having passed from death to life. What a glorious truth it is, that dwelling in love, and eternal life, are one thing; eternal life and eternal love united in the glory of heaven!

16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

In the chapter and verse of the same numbers in the Gospel of John (iii. 16.) we have the blessed truth, "God

so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." The general reading of the manuscripts is not "*the love of God*," but emphatically "*the love;*" that which is the perfect pattern, the model, and fountain-head of love, that which above all other things, deserves the name of love. Let us dwell on the perception of this—"*perceive we*." It is something we at length discern through all obstructions. This dying love of Jesus solves all other doubts about the love of God, which cold and suffering, agony and sorrow, disappointment and bereavement, abounding on every side, might occasion. Here is the key to every thing else, showing, however dark things may be, however sufferings may abound, however dismal all around us, there is real deep love in all. Nay, in the very flames of hell, I doubt not when we come to the fulness of heavenly light, we shall see that God, while awfully just to the wicked, is love to all creation. What then is this great proof of God's love?

"*He laid down his life for us.*" Our dear Saviour says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But here is the surpassing nature of this love; we were not friends, but enemies, we hated the God who made us, yet He laid down His life for us, and now the wonderful and astonishing fact of God incarnate, God in the person of his Son, this glorious God becomes a little babe. God in want, sorrow and suffering, in our nature and in the same nature dying on the tree, this is such an exhibition of love, that its rejection leaves man exposed to that ruin, from which they refuse to escape.

"*And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" We have the love of God brought before us, as the grand model which we are to copy in our conduct to our fellow men. The term brother here, has a larger signification than brethren in grace or in kindred—it may have a special reference to them, as Jesus died specially for the elect, but really for all men. He gave Himself a ransom for all, therefore as Jesus laid down His life for all, we ought in the same spirit of love to tread in His steps; and if, in

God's providence, we could, by our death, promote the salvation of our fellow men, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Thus, by the dying love of Jesus, we are brought to the highest summit of Christian love. This love is perfectly consistent with sharp reproof, and most heart-searching exposure of error and defect; so we see in our Lord's denunciations in Matt. xxiii., so in St. Paul's address, Acts xxviii. 26—28. The reason of every cross and sorrow and sickness and trial that we have, is the intense love of God our Saviour. O my family, walk this day, and every day, in the full light of God's love to your souls.

17. *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

Such great truths as these have wonderfully affected the whole state of the Christian world. In heathen lands, the intolerable oppression of the poor, and the bondage under which they groan, is a contrast to the innumerable plans for their relief, which we hold in countries enlightened by Christianity. All relief of the poor, all public charities, all individual benevolence, how are they animated and strengthened by such passages as these!

The text divides itself into three parts, those who have this world's good, the sight of a brother in need, and the supposed neglect of that brother. First, then, those who have this world's good or abundance of God's blessings in any form; either talents, strength, abilities, wealth or any thing by which they may help a brother, should consider that, whatever they have, they hold as stewards from God for his glory and the good of others.

"*Seeth his brother have need.*" He seeth it, has actual knowledge of his brother's need. That need is the want of something which it is requisite for his good that he should have, either for his body or soul. At the sight of

such need kindly feelings are naturally kindled in our bosom; but the case supposed, is the checking and restraining of these natural kindly feelings; the bowels of compassion are shut up. This is here met by the solemn question, "*how dwelleth the love of God in him?*" Asking a question is often the strongest mark of negation: thus, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" This question teaches many great truths. The love of God always constrains us to help and pity those who are in need. He has given many plain commands to this effect, and this is the love of God, that we keep His commands; and the pattern of divine love should also constrain us; He loved *us*, in our need,—pitied *us* in our need. Lastly, observe the glorious truth that the love of God does fill the Christian, and dwells in him, as the governing and presiding power; the king over his whole soul, spreading light and beauty, grace and kindness, blessedness and glory over all his thoughts, words and ways.

18. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

How often the direction to real unfeigned love comes in the scriptures! So Romans xii. 9—"Let love be without dissimulation,"—James ii. 15—"If a brother or a sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Why has the Holy Ghost thought it necessary thus to urge the Christian to true love without dissimulation? Alas, we see in polished society, how often the language of courtesy covers inward alienation and dislike, and how the words are kind when within there is envy, anger, malice, jealousy, and all unholy passions. There is a great temptation to love in word only, words cost us nothing, it is so easy to speak smooth kind words;—"*let us not love in word*," let them

not be mere words, that is, but the expression of the inward feeling of the heart. It is true that the law of kindness should ever dwell on the lips of a Christian, but it should spring from the full fountain of the heart, always gushing up. Let our love not be a mere cup of water, but the full deep inward spring, "*Either in tongue.*" What is the difference between loving in word and in tongue? this seems to imply more hypocrisy and dissimulation; all the skill and art of the tongue, a great flow of words employed to convince others that we love them, words smoother than oil, while war is in the heart. Let us be men in understanding about these things, and love not in word or in tongue, "*but in deed.*" Hence let us look not on our own things, but on the things of others also. The actions of love prove the reality of love, because some self-sacrifice, and toil, and labour, is required to show love in *deed*. Yet this even is not the fulness of love to which the apostle would raise us. A man may be making sacrifices for others, hoping for something again, therefore he rises yet further to be "*loving in truth;*" real love to all men being the right spring of all good conduct to them. But how is this possible when we see men injuring us, and full of wickedness, enmity, and hatred? we must discriminate here, we ought to hate their *evil deeds*, we ought to love their *persons*; to love our enemies, to bless them that persecute us, that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven. Greatness in the eternal kingdom is the reward of such deep self-sacrificing love.

19. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

You see it is well worth sacrificing selfishness, hatred, ill-will, and every disposition contrary to love. The effect is nothing less than this, we know that we are of the truth, partakers of Christ and his salvation, among those

saved out of selfishness and enmity, into the glorious company that live in light and love for ever and ever, and without this love we have no satisfactory evidence. See how strongly the apostle speaks, 1 Corinthians xiii. 1, 2—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"*And shall assure our hearts before him.*"—A sweet idea this is; having perfect confidence towards God, so that we have no doubt at all, that through Christ we are righteous in His sight, and He approves and accepts us. We have learnt our natural selfishness, and when we find that we have obtained the victory over it, and that we really love, it assures our hearts before God Himself. God help you then, my dear family, to cast out of your bosom everything contrary to love.

20. *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

The Apostle is here endeavouring to impress upon us the great importance of having an assured and upright heart before God, a conscience void of offence, all clear and straight between us and our God. If our own heart condemn us, as professing one thing and meaning another, it destroys all our confidence toward God, we are injuring ourselves, destroying our own happiness and communion with God. He will not give us joy in Him, while we are wilfully breaking His laws, and offending in His sight. Here we learn a very weighty truth, that it is important always to keep in mind; God is always *inspecting and reading our innermost man*, and if our own heart condemn us, He is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. But then the difficulty arises—we have all thus sinned before

God ; all our hearts have again and again condemned us, what shall we do ? Blessed be God there is a remedy : the blood of Jesus sprinkles our conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and so being free from condemnation, and justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "He gave Himself for us that he might *first* redeem us from all iniquity, *and then* purify us unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." He purifies all who put their trust in Him. Look unto Jesus, and you shall be saved from your iniquities.

21. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

This is very like the experience of St. Paul—"our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversasion in the world." As connected with the preceding verses, it means that our hearts should not condemn us for the want of real cordial love to our fellow-creatures. Now to be brought to this state of mind, we need first to be purged from our old sins, and then the help of the Spirit of Christ, that we may be taught of God to love another. Thus we have confidence toward God ; we feel God is our Father, and our fellow-men are our brethren. And of all blessed states of mind, to have boldness and joy in communion with God, to have the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father, and to have a heart glowing with love to our brethren and to all, is indeed the most blessed. God give us all this love.

22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

Observe the condition of prayer being heard, it is that we

love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth, and have our heart's confidence in the Lord, and fixed upon pleasing him. With these two things, we may be assured that "*whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him.*" The promises of God are very large to prayer, but then it is to the prayer of the believer, of him whose heart is under the power of faith and love. If we have enmity towards others in our hearts; if selfishness reigns, if we have no confidence of heart toward God, but are doubting and suspecting God, then we are not in a right state of mind to receive answers to our prayers, God does not answer such. It is made very plain in the next verse, what the commandments of God are; faith and love—in keeping these commandments, "*we do that which is pleasing to his sight.*" Sweet truth! God is pleased with our endeavours to keep his commandments. He approves and accepts all our attempts to do his will. Now, it is very pleasant to children to do things to please their parents, and to parents to do things to please their children, but O my dear family, the grand thing is, to do things that will please God. This should be our great aim, and then, "*Whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of him.*" What a large word that "*whatsoever*" is, for body or for soul, for time or for eternity, whatsoever is really profitable that we ask, we shall receive; only, let our state of mind be that which the apostle has pointed out, and then all our requests being according to the will of God, they shall all be granted.

23. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

Here we have the whole state of a believer's mind which is acceptable in the sight of God, the whole course of a Christian's life and the peculiar characteristic of a child of God. That which distinguishes him from all other men is here brought out, *faith working by love.* "*This is his com-*

mandment," the sum of His commandments, singled out as that which includes and embraces all the rest, *that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*" Oh! how graciously is this put as a command, to meet the fears and anxieties of a perplexed and doubting Christian; the workings of a distressed mind are these: 'I dare not believe my sin is so great, it would be presumption to believe there is mercy for me.' But dare you break the commandment of God?

"*This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*" Satan uses the extent of your sin, and the depth of your guilt, as an argument why you should not believe. But this ground is taken away by the commandment of the Most High God, who calls you to have no doubt that He will receive you, welcome you and save you. Surely this commandment has comforted many a tried and anxious Christian; may it comfort you! Then observe we are to believe in the "*name of* His Son," in every name which Jesus bears for us, as Mediator, Advocate, Shepherd, Captain of our Salvation, Prophet, Priest, King and Saviour; as having all power in heaven and earth, able to save to the uttermost, complete in every thing as our glorious Head and Saviour, and not our Saviour merely, but the Saviour for all men, *sufficient* for all, *efficient* to those who believe.

Why is it said, "the name of *His Son*?" This brings in beautifully the Divine glory of our Emmanuel, as the only-begotten of the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth. In Him we are to believe, first to know, then to credit, then to confide in Him. But this is not all, there is another commandment, "*that we should love one another.*" How naturally this follows believing in Jesus; wrecked in one common shipwreck, how are we endeared to one another, in the one life-boat which brings us to land; it is a blessed command. The Lord must have deep thoughts of kindness toward us, or He would never have given such a command. The very spirit of happiness is to dwell in love; banish then all selfish, carnal, hateful thoughts, that

would interfere with love. But the direction is amplified, not merely "*love one another*," but "*love one another as He gave us commandment*." He gave it to us as a new commandment, because he introduced a *new motive*, His own dying love, and a *new measure*, "as I have loved you," therefore there is no emphasis in the words, *as He gave us commandment*.

Well, my dear family, if we learn this one verse practically and experimentally, it is the shortest and the best body of practical divinity we can possibly have in our minds and our affections, our words, and our lives.

24. *And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

We have here the blessed motive to keeping God's commandments, which commandments we have seen to be emphatically comprehended in faith working by love. See what the gospel leads to; it does not leave us in a lawless state, but *under the law to Christ*. We are delivered indeed from its condemnation, we are delivered from the law as a curse and as a legal covenant of works, but not delivered from it as a rule of life; on the contrary we are brought to delight in it, to see that it is all light and love and happiness. We are made free to love God, and to love man, by believing in Jesus. Now he that thus keeps His commandments dwelleth in God. In many parts of scripture we have this beautifully illustrated. "Be thou my strong habitation whereunto I may continually resort:" "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." It is to live in the atmosphere of the Divine perfections, protected, provided for, made happy and joyful by constant communion with God. But for this there must first be keeping the commandments; if we neglect them, directly sin like a thick cloud comes and separates between us and our God. He then,

that keepeth His commandments, "*dwelleth in God;*" but not only so, "*God dwelleth in him;*" He does this emphatically by the Holy Spirit. He dwells for ever with God's people, so that their bodies are called the temples of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Father and the Son and the Divine Spirit, three persons in one God, come and make their abode with us. We have this desired and explained in the apostolic benediction; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all;" here we see God dwelleth in us, in three persons and one God.

The whole scope and design of the Gospel is to bring us into this state—"*Hereby know we that He dwelleth in us, by His Spirit which he hath given us.*" Here we have the evidence that He dwelleth in us, and it is a very great and important thing to be assured of this. It is everlasting life to have God abiding in us, and everlasting death to be without God in the world, and we may and ought to know our own state in this respect. Assurance has been much scoffed at in the world, but it is a real and invaluable blessing. The Lord dwells much in His word on this great blessing of assurance, and it is our own fault if we have it not. What then is the ground of assurance?

"*The Spirit which He hath given us.*" Something imparted to us which we had not by nature; "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God." There is given a real spiritual teaching to every child of God; he is a new creature, and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,—if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His." His residence is known by the lovely fruit of the Spirit, which we are thus enabled to bring forth. Then notice, it is the Spirit which he hath *given* us, not obtained by *our merit, but freely* bestowed by His grace. Cease not to ask for this heavenly gift.

CHAPTER IV.

1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

THE warning against danger comes from love in the Apostle; he first calls them "*beloved*." It is the intensity of love that will give the strongest warning against common danger.

"*Believe not every spirit*." By *spirit* the Apostle means teacher, but he looks to the real root of all teaching. There is the evil spirit, or Satan, who teaches; there is the good Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, who teaches; and there being these different kinds of spirits working in the heart of man, "*believe not every spirit;*" and these teachings it is not always easy to distinguish. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and it is important not to be ignorant of his devices. Almost all false teaching puts on the aspect of true teaching, like a wolf coming in sheep's clothing. Then do not take a man on his own word merely; do not be carried away by a fair show in the flesh. There always has been, and always will be, this trial of men's spirits by false teachers; and to discriminate between the false and the true, requires what the Apostle calls "discerning of spirits," and which he speaks of as a special gift from God; the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the discerning of spirits, all these "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 8—11.) Oh, what need have we to look up for Divine guidance, lest we be misled!

"*But try the spirits whether they are of God*." This is often brought before us; as in 1 Cor. xiv. 29. "Let the

prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1 Thess. v. 21. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Rev. ii. 2. Try the spirits therefore according to the grand test God has given in his own word. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It is true that man can pervert the word of God, and the devil can quote Scripture abundantly; but if we keep close to the whole word of God, we shall always find enough of plain truth, *to try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* What a foresight the Holy Ghost had of all the false prophets which should be in the world, apart from all teachers of idolatry, through the heathen world. In professing Christendom, what false teachers there have been from age to age. Among the leaders,—the patriarch of Constantinople and the clergy under him, the Pope and the cardinals under him, all heretical teachers from Simon Magus and Arius to Socinus; then if we look at the wide-spread Mahometan delusion, what a view it gives us of the many false prophets which should go out into the world. Our Saviour gives the same warning, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matt. xxiv. 5, 24. And this is true, not merely of professedly Christian teachers, but of teachers of science. "Beware of philosophy falsely so called," for, to a most unhappy extent, men of science are men of infidelity, who deceive and destroy the soul. Submit not, then, to the teaching of man as infallibly true.

To "*try the spirits*" may be a difficult, laborious, arduous task, but it is a plain duty, and if we are deceived it is entirely our own fault; God has given an infallible touchstone, a light bright as the sun at noon-day, in His own precious and holy word, aided by the constant teach-

ing of His Spirit, given in answer to humble and believing prayer.

2. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*

Having brought before us the danger of false teachers, the Apostle now gives a discriminating test by which we may know them. We have various tests from the Word of God: our Saviour gives us a practical test.—"By their fruits ye shall know them;" here we have a doctrinal test. We have seen that "spirit" here means teacher; every teacher then that "*confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*,"—who makes that the grand doctrine, the great governing truth which he teaches, is of God—so St. John opens his gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God; . . . . . and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." So St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3. Here then is the grand and all-important truth, that the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all worlds, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God our Saviour, did in the person of the Son take our nature, actually become man, with all our temptations and infirmities, sin only excepted, so that He can enter into all our feelings and circumstances, and sympathize with all our sorrows.

He took hold of our nature, redeemed that nature from the curse, and now is entered into the heavens, and maketh intercession for us, having a fellow feeling for us and a oneness with us. Here is the grand doctrine of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and this is what all false teaching has endeavoured to set aside. Mahomedanism sets aside Christ, and puts Mahomet in his place. Popery sets aside Christ, and puts

the Virgin Mary and the saints in His place; Socinianism, all formality, worldliness, and self-righteousness, have this distinguishing feature, they set aside Christ. It is not therefore so much the outside form which marks the children of God. Outside forms have their importance, but let this doctrine be kept clear and prominent, and other truths will come in around this great centre truth. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."

Thus, my dear family, the great feature of all truly scriptural teaching, is the prominent, constant confession of an incarnate Redeemer. O may He be all in all to us.

3. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it shall come; and even now already is it in the world.*

"*Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:*" it is very important to weigh well what this confession means, for I suppose there is hardly a professing Christian who has not repeated the Apostle's creed; and whoever has been baptized in the name of Jesus has in one sense made a confession of his truth. But this is not what is here meant by confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. It is believing on an Incarnate God as our Saviour; living on that truth in the heart, and confessing it, not merely with the lips, but in the whole course of the life; a consistent confession in the sight of others. This will answer the boastings of Popery; perhaps no Church has so much outward confession of Christ; they put crosses on every thing, a crucifix in every Church, and to exalt their Church they talk continually of the power and dominion of Christ, while their system in every part, is a practical denial of Christ. They deny the sympathies of His human nature, by putting the Virgin Mary in his place; they deny his completed sacrifice, by substituting masses; they supplant all his offices

of Prophet, Priest, and King, and thus are emphatically entitled to the name of *Antichrist*. In all the epistles you find as a part of Christian truth, and Christian instruction, a warning of the apostacy, and a continual guard against it, because the Spirit of God foresaw there would be a fatal, wide-spread, real, and spiritual denial among professing Christians, that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.

"*And this is that spirit of Antichrist.*"—The apostle here brings in again the doctrine of Antichrist which he had before mentioned. "He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Chap. ii. 22. He gives here as the grand characteristic of that Antichrist that should come, that he denies Jesus Christ having come in the flesh, and certainly nothing can be plainer or stronger than the mighty efforts of Popery to set aside all the work of the Saviour, while acknowledging Him in words. Therefore the Reformers, with hardly one exception, characterised Popery as Antichrist.

This is confirmed by various prophecies; therefore the apostle says, "*whereof ye have heard that it should come:*" he probably alludes to the statement made by Paul; "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." 2 Thess. ii. 3. Besides the testimony of the Apostles, the Old Testament is full of it; in the Psalms—in Isaiah—in Daniel, especially chap. vii.—it is plainly brought before us, as speaking great words against the Most High, and wearing out the saints of the Most High.

"*And even now already is it in the world.*"—The Holy Scriptures generally give in prophecy a point of departure, which is of great value in guiding us to the true interpretation of the prophecy: so St. Paul, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work," &c. 2 Thess. ii. 7. "There is, then," the Apostle would say, "the beginning of the apostacy now, in the false teachers, in those who magnify external observances." From the very first spread of the gospel, there was the beginning of this delusion;

and it gradually grew and increased, till it completed itself in the whole system of Popery, as we now see it in the world, and never will it be finally overthrown, till the Saviour destroys it with the brightness of his coming.

4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

See here the two distinct classes into which the whole human race is divided—those who are of God, and those who are of the world. So our Lord distinguishes them, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon,"—"the friendship of the world is enmity against God." We have the same truth, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, and following verses. Observe in the second place, *Antichrist is of the world*—there is union between Antichrist and the world; in the language of Revelation, the *harlot* rides on the *beast*. All that is of the world finds its natural place in false religion; and false religion is invented to maintain those worldly lusts from which Christ came to deliver us.

Well, then, amidst all this, "*Ye are of God*"—not merely ye belong to God, but ye are begotten of God, born again of the Spirit,—a Divine nature is imparted to you. Here is the real, genuine character of true Christians, and this is the all-important point; if thus we have a new heart and a new spirit, it then follows, "*ye have overcome them.*" Observe first, there is a great struggle and conflict, and this mighty battle arises from the two natures which all have when they are born of God, and therefore it is not without a struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, that we can stand and gain the victory. There are very many temptations to ease and self-indulgence, and to make peace

with these our deadly enemies, and yield to them, but wherever there is really the Spirit of God, there *ye have overcome them.*

See now the reason why victory is attained ; "*because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*" The real captains and leaders of this conflict are not flesh and blood ; not merely man with man ; but Satan, the prince and god of this world, who claims dominion over the whole world ; who has to be dispossessed from the authority he claims :—and He who is stronger than this strong man armed. Blessed be God, strong as the devil is, god, as he is called, of this world, Jesus is infinitely stronger ; for Jesus has in himself Divine power, Satan has only derived power. This is not *now* to be realized by sight ; sight shows us Satan's followers enthroned in the kingdoms of this world ; it is faith alone which reveals to us the superior power of Jesus, and the wisdom of following Him.

5. They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

"*They are of the world.*" There is a constant harmony between the discourses of our Lord, and the epistles of St. John ; we have many similar statements in chapter viii. of the gospel of John, in verse 23, "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath ; I am from above ; ye are of this world, I am not of this world ;" and verse 43. "Why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word ;" and verse 47. "He that is of God heareth God's words ; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Oh that our minds, like the blessed John's, may be so moulded into the mind and doctrine of Christ, that our thoughts may overflow with His thoughts. —"*They are of the world :*" Antichrist is of the world ; this accounts for the success and triumph of Popery and Mahommedanism ; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye,

and the pride of life are gratified. This accounts for the rapid way in which Tractarianism spreads ; it is easy, instead of crucifying the fleshly lusts, to seek to satisfy the conscience with outward forms. Self-righteousness will always have plenty of advocates. It is so flattering to the pride and vanity of the human heart, even in its most arduous sacrifices of earthly comfort, that it will ever attract fallen man. And on the other hand, when evangelical men imbibe the spirit of the world, the world will tolerate and even admire them. But which of the apostles did the world love ? which of the saints and prophets has the world loved ? read the eleventh of Hebrews, and see how distinct the children of God are from the children of the world. There is no option for you, my family, you cannot have the good opinion and favour of the world, and the good opinion and favour of God. "If any man will be the friend of the world, he is the enemy of God," *therefore speak they of the world*, they magnify every thing sensual, they have abundance of painting and music to charm the eye and delight the ear, of pomp and show to please the natural man. An outside carnal religion is totally distinct from that spiritual mind which is life and peace.

"*The world heareth them.*" They count their majority with triumph, they are the only Catholic and Universal church ! why ! the very claim of numbers, the very boast of being catholic, stamps their apostacy. There is a Holy Catholic Church of those gathered from all ages out of the world, combining the glorified saints, and those upon earth who fear and love God ; the Head of this Catholic Church is the Lord Jesus Christ ; it shall be completed when He returns in His glory, and till then any church which professes to be universal on earth, and triumphs in being followed by the whole world, bears the mark of its own apostacy. "The world heareth them" because "they are of the world." Now, my dear family, form your judgment from the word of God, not from the sentiments of men ; the people of God are a little flock, in the midst of a world departing from God.

6. *We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

"*We are of God.*" Infidelity comes here with plausible speeches, and says, What rashness and presumption! here are those who are wiser than all the world! Is it rashness? is it presumption? Oh no, it is the firm standing of a true believer on the infallible word of God, the power of which he has experienced in his own soul. We know we are of God by innumerable testimonies, we are born again of God, our minds are enlightened by the truth of God, we are brought to love God, we have the teaching of His Spirit, all our principles are conformed to the will of God, to promote the glory of God, and according to the mind of God; thus we know that we are of God.

"*He that knoweth God heareth us.*" Here is the great distinctive character of all the children of God, they know God: "this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God." They know God not merely by the works of creation, but as He is displayed in redemption as our loving Father; light and holiness, truth and godliness, mercy and love all combining in Him. They know Him in the experience of daily communion with Him, as with a friend. He that thus knoweth God *heareth us;* this is always the case when there is a real knowledge of God, that there is love to the word of God, and attention to that word. You see there are two opposite things, the world, and the word of God. The world hears the world, and goes after it; the children of God hear the word of God and go after it —"my sheep hear my voice." Oh that we may all have this sweet evidence that we are of God.

"*Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*" Popery shuts up the Bible. Those who are following in the steps of Popery,—the Tractarians—discourage the Bible, and bring out antiquity, trying to shew

that the Bible is insufficient without tradition ; here is the Spirit of error.

7. *Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

"*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.*" Observe, in connection with the preceding verse, how the severest trial of the spirit, the most full separation from the world, and most distinct perception of the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error, is perfectly consistent with a glowing heart of love to others, and indeed necessary to true love. There is therefore a perfect harmony and union between the truths which the Apostle here brings out. "*Beloved!*" How fond the Apostle is of this word *beloved ;* there will, and there ought to be, endearing expression between Christians ; if the heart is full of love, out of the fulness of the heart the mouth will speak.

"*Let us love one another.*" First in the immediate family circle, then in the wider circle of the larger family of Christ ; then in the circle of the still larger family of man ; love is of a beautifully growing and expansive nature, "*for love is of God.*" Hatred is of the devil ; he was a murderer from the beginning, and our natural state is one of selfishness, wrapped up wholly in our own honour, and pleasure, and advantage ; but the love of God raises us out of selfishness, and enables us to regard others as ourselves. Love is of God in various respects, as it partakes of the nature of God, for "God is love"—as it is the command of God, and as it proceeds from the inward teaching of God's own Spirit ;—"*ye are taught of God* to love one another." So love is emphatically of God. And as love is of God, so every one that loveth "*is born of God, and knoweth God.*" See what the proof of regeneration in its highest sense is ; not outward baptism, but love : never think you are spiritually regenerate, but as you feel that you love ; baptism is but the outward means,

the real spiritual change is wrought in the heart, and manifested in the life, by the Spirit of God. A converted heart and a holy life are sure evidences of knowing God.

8. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.*

"*He that loveth not, knoweth not God.*" There may often be a great assumption of knowledge, but wherever there is the absence of love, there is no knowledge of the highest kind; that is, true knowledge of God himself. "*He that loveth not.*" It does not mean natural affection; there may be a great deal of that, though mingled with selfishness and pride, in the most wicked: but "he that loveth not" his fellow-men with real affection, and especially the children of God, who are dear to God, with brotherly love; such love as he had spoken of in the preceding verse, love which includes our enemies; he that loveth not thus, knoweth not God, for "*God is love.*" It is wonderful how in the last book of Scripture (for many have agreed that the epistles of John were the latest written)—in this closing epistle, we have the fullest view of those two glories of God—light and love—the combination of which constitute a most blessed revelation of what God is. God has many other glorious perfections, but all these may be viewed in the light of love; God is wisdom; His wisdom guides the workings of His love; God is power, and it gives efficacy to love; God is justice, His justice is the guard of His love; there is a relative connection with love in them all. The glory of this love we see in the gift of his Son. And this should be the solution of all that is dark and doubtful in His providence. We meet trials and difficulties and disappointments, God is love in them: He makes all work for our good. We see wickedness abounding on every side, still write on all: God is love, He spares, He pardons, He saves transgressors. The long-suffering of God is to be accounted salvation. We see the everlasting punishment of the wicked. It is awful,

it is tremendous. Yet even in that may be read too, God is love; He would teach by it a lesson unspeakably important to all creation, of the tremendous evil of sin, and so would guard all creation from that evil. Let our love then be like His,—a love that cannot bear that which is evil, even a wise, deep, full, holy love, like our God's.

9. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

"*In this was manifested*," &c. There is an emphasis in the word "*this;*" the love of God was manifested in the works of creation, in the wonders of Providence, in His making His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. But there are many dark things in Providence. Well, be it so; here is an altogether unanswerable and perfect manifestation of love, which is the key to dark matters, and shows that there must be real, deep love, in those things in which we cannot see love. This solves every doubt, that the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, should have such love to us, as to give His only-begotten Son. This is such bright love, as should silence every doubt. As Christ is called the brightness of His glory, so in this light we may see the glory of divine love. The love was manifested "*towards us*," who had sinned and come short in every thing of the glory of God, who had no love to God, who thought nothing of our Creator, whose whole object and aim was selfish.

"*Because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world.*" In one sense, and a very important sense, all the intelligent creatures of God are His sons—angels are the sons of God; we also are His offspring; but there is One, who is emphatically God's own Son, His only Son, "*His only-begotten Son*," and here is the strength of the manifestation of the Divine love, that this Son was sent into the world. He left the regions of heavenly bliss, He

emptied himself of his Divine glory, veiling it in human flesh, and tabernacled among us. God sent His Son! "*into the world;*" a world when first created, very good; but through sin become very corrupt; a region of rebels, the seat of Satan's empire. What then was the reason which moved the Almighty God to send His Son into the world?

"*That we might live through Him.*" We have here the connection between the love of God, and our living through Him. What is it to live through Christ? St. Paul describes it thus, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is a natural life which all have, and there is a spiritual life which arises from faith in Jesus; "the just live by faith;" it is a life of faith, hope and love, a life above sight and sense, and the mere intellectual powers of man, it is a life only to be discerned by the spiritually-minded, "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." There is, therefore, really a spiritual life, which comes by Christ our Saviour. Jesus purchased it by His death, Jesus bestows it by His Spirit, Jesus maintains it by dwelling in our hearts. He is the way, the truth, and the life. The manifestations of this life are various, according to the truths of God which come before us; if objects of wrath and judgment are brought before us, like Noah we are moved with fear. If commandments come before us, the movements of this life are to obey them. If promises, to credit them and rest upon them. See then the intimate connection between the manifestation of the love of God, and spiritual life; it is the great doctrine of the love of God in Christ Jesus, seen, believed, felt and embraced, that is the grand means by which souls pass from death to life. May we then continually contemplate this wonderful mystery of God's love to us sinners in Christ Jesus.

10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

This love of God is pure and unmixed: emphatically, pre-eminently love: The brightest and highest example of love that could possibly be given to us to follow. Here are love and mercy shining in pure original splendour, without any external origin or extraneous source; for God is himself the fountain of love. He was always first in love. He loved us first in creation, in providing a beautiful world for our use, in giving us the comforts of life, in our preservation, in his providence, and in every earthly blessing; but what a wonderful instance of love was that, which prompted him to send his Son to lay down his life for us, when we were enemies to him!

"*Not that we loved God.*" When he loved us he had lain down his life for the ungodly. It was love to rebels—to enemies—to those who hated him. This is the peculiarity of Divine love. His love to us when we were enemies to him, will be the bright jewel in the Redeemer's crown throughout eternity. What a blessed truth is this, that by the death of the Divine Immanuel, God is reconciled to the world, not imputing to men their trespasses; giving us a season of grace that we may turn unto him and be cleansed; that our sins may be washed in the fountain by him opened for all sin and uncleanness! May this be received in all our hearts and pacify our own consciences: may it be our confidence, our hope, our joy, for our own salvation, and, before the eyes of all men, our constant glory. God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh may we profit by this bright example of divine love, and in our conduct to others may we shew that this love sends forth a bright reflection in our daily lives.

11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

"*Beloved, if God so loved us.*" If he so loved us, as is described in the ninth and tenth verses; the force of the expression here is, if, when we did not love God, He loved us; loved us while we were enemies, sinful and rebellious, loved us so as to give His only-begotten Son for us, then we ought to love one another; it is the grand quickening impulse to all love to our fellow-men. God is the perfect pattern of excellence, of all that is lovely and glorious; we then, who ought to aim at excellence in every thing, should copy this love; in God we have a perfect model. Is there love to all, to the whole world in Him? our love should be universal; did God love us when enemies? we should have love to our enemies; did God *first* love us? then our love should be spontaneous and free: is His persevering love? then ours should be persevering. We *ought* so to love, because he has commanded us to be followers of him as dear children; we ought because it is our highest interest and our truest happiness. Here then is our great duty brought before us, with its grand motive and model. What are the impediments in the way of its performance? our fallen nature, which is full of selfishness, pride, and alienation from God and man. And the great remedy is, looking to our crucified Saviour dying for His enemies. But still there are many things rising up in our hearts, that have constantly to be watched against; feelings of jealousy, suspicion, and ill-will, from the remains of our fallen nature. Much of our Christian life consists in watching over, restraining, and subduing that which impedes love, by the help of the Holy Ghost, freely given to them that ask;—"the fruit of the Spirit is *love*."

12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

"*No man hath seen God at any time.*" The apostle seems to be entering farther into the explanation of that expression "if God so loved us." The natural conclusion of God's love to us we might expect to be, "we ought to love Him;" but there is a difficulty in rising to the love of God, immediately and directly. We are creatures of the senses, and much affected by visible things, and God being a spirit, we require some more sensible way of shewing our love to God; and therefore he has pointed out a way in which we can express our love to him, by showing love to our brethren. Thus our Saviour says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." I suppose this to be the connection between the verses. "*No man hath seen God at any time.*" The nearest approach to it, was, when Moses, in the cleft of the rock, saw the back parts of Jehovah, and had the glorious revelation of the name of the Lord. Hereafter we hope to see Him face to face, and to know as we are known, but this must be taken with such passages as 1 Timothy vi. 16,—"Whom no man hath seen or can see." His glory in its fulness and extent is utterly incomprehensible by finite creatures, and we have not now full power of openly expressing our love to Him; but God requiring us to love one another, if we do love others, we have a real manifestation in our hearts of love to God; in how many ways thus, the commandment to love is pressed.

"*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.*" In proportion as we have the mind and spirit of God, we have God Himself dwelling in us, "How can two walk together except they are agreed?" It is when we are reconciled to God and enter into his mind, that we dwell in God and He in us.

"*And His love is perfected in us.*" This clause has been a disputed one, as to whether the expression *His love*, refers to God's love to us, or our love to God; it probably comprehends both, God's love objectively is perfected in us, as we get a realizing, clear, full view of it. Then again our love to him is perfected,—as the more we get to love each other, the more really we manifest that we love God. Observe that word *perfected*; it is no doubt the great duty of the Christian constantly to aim at perfection; "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"—so in the beautiful prayer at the opening of our communion service, we ask, "That we may perfectly love Thee." But I do not see here or anywhere else in the Bible, the doctrine which some devoted Christians hold, that we can attain perfect love, or entire sanctification here below. This seems directly contrary to other parts of scripture. When St. James (ii. 22.) says of Abraham,—"His faith was made perfect," he does not mean that Abraham had no measure of unbelief, but that his faith was manifested to be a true and real faith.

13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of his Spirit.*

Love to others becomes a clear evidence that we have the indwelling of God,—that we have the Holy Spirit giving us his mind and character. How much then should we cultivate and pray for love, and in every way seek to advance it. The great way to increase love, is to meditate much on the intense love of God to us. In cold weather we get warm by coming to the fire: it is by coming near the bright and warm flame of God's love to us, that we shall get warmth of love to Him and to our fellow-men.

The loving one another, God's dwelling in us, and the having the love of God perfected in us, we have already considered as being proofs that we dwell in Him and He in us. We dwell in Him by constant communion with Him,

by meditation, by prayer, by making the Lord our strong habitation, to which we may resort in every time of need. He dwells in us by His Spirit given to us, so that our hearts become the residence of God himself. Here we have indeed a glorious truth : the union of God with man, a mutual indwelling of God with us, and we dwelling with God, the fountain-head of which is the incarnation of Jesus. In Him the union between God and man was completed, *He* is the great fountain-head from which all other unions flow, and the great proof of this is :

"*He hath given us of his Spirit.*" Here we have a large subject—the work of the Spirit in man,—that which peculiarly distinguishes the present dispensation, and from which it is called the ministration of the Spirit. There are a vast variety of operations of the Spirit,—teaching, enlightening, convincing of sin, leading to Jesus, purifying, sanctifying, giving the spirit] of adoption, bearing witness with our spirit, &c. But the view which is taken here seems to be, the likeness to God which the Spirit accomplishes in the soul. Is God pure ? Then the Spirit makes us pure. Is He holy ? then the Spirit makes us holy. Is He gracious ? so shall we seek to be. In all things the likeness of God is to be imparted to us, "*because He hath given us of his Spirit.*" O that we, each for ourselves, may have this proof of God's dwelling in us. See to what a height of blessedness the gospel would raise us ! Talk of mere earthly distinctions ! the poorest beggar who has God's Spirit dwelling in him, is infinitely better off, than the most prosperous worldly man. It is the height of human elevation to have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, and to be followers of Him as dear children. How may this be gained ! Through the grace of Christ it is given in prayer : " Ask and it shall be given you." Pray for the Holy Spirit, and he will be imparted to you. They that seek shall find. Oh that none of us by carnal self-indulgence, by negligence, or by indolence, may lose this unspeakable blessing !

14. *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

See here the blessed effect of receiving the Spirit of God: all who obtain this blessing, are enabled to get a sight of Christ as their own Saviour, and testify of Him that He was sent to be the Saviour of the world.

There are two parts of every Christian's experience. 1. He sees Christ as a Saviour: and, secondly, confesses *that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*. this last truth is often repeated here, see verses 9, 10, 14. We must never lose sight of the great love of the Father in sending His Son, as well as the grace of Christ, who was sent to fulfil this glorious office as *Saviour of the world*: there are several statements here in which St. John, as usual, follows the words of Christ, see John iii. 16, 17. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." It was singular that the Samaritans, who were looked upon as *outcasts*, should be some of the first to acknowledge the extended mission of the Saviour. John iv. 42. "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

"*Sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*"—Let us now consider what this means, and what it does not mean; It does not mean that all the world are saved by Christ. The wicked are everlastingly punished. We must not deceive ourselves with the idea of universal salvation. But it does mean some great truths—that there is a full sufficiency in Christ's atonement for the sins of the whole world, see chap. ii. 2. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." All sin is atoned for by this sacrifice, and no man is condemned simply for being a sinner, but

because he rejects Christ as his Saviour, and loves darkness rather than light. There is a full redemption for the guilt of a fallen world ; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." However depraved you may be, there is no impediment, but your own reluctance, to your at once returning to your reconciled Father. Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and we may tell this to the whole world. Here is glorious news indeed—Christ, by His one sacrifice, has made a complete and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world. He not only delivers us from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but also from its power and pollution. How precious is this truth, it is more to us than thousands of worlds, or than the whole of creation being bestowed upon us, if we are thereby brought to dwell in God and He in us. And not only is this true, but there is a time coming, when the whole earth shall be delivered by Christ from the corruption of sin, and He will be manifested as a Saviour, in the richest, fullest sense ; there shall be no more sorrow, nor death, nor curse, but the world shall be filled with righteousness and glory, at the period of the millenium. Nothing less than this is procured for our world by our Saviour Jesus.

St. John at the close of his life had seen something of the largeness of this truth, by ocular demonstration. He had seen with his own eyes the gospel spreading among the Gentile nations of the earth ; and he had found its triumphs predicted in the word of ancient prophecy. Each Gentile convert has a personal demonstration that Jesus is the Saviour of the *world*, for he feels in his own heart that Christ has saved him. He sees it not only in that which is past ; but, as it is said of the promises, "not having already received them, but having seen them afar off, they embraced them ;" so the believer looks forward to that day, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and when Christ shall indeed be seen to be the Saviour of the world.

"*We have seen and do testify.*" "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The glorious truth that we may bear witness of to every man dwelling upon the earth is this, "Christ is your full and complete Saviour." How justly then Christians are called the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and all those titles which express their usefulness and blessedness to others. God has not such narrow and contracted views as to make our happiness centre in ourselves alone; it is in making others happy that we are happy; it is in giving that we multiply what has been given to us.

15. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

Not only we who *testify*, but whosoever shall *confess*. The process of thought here seems to be, not merely the testimony of a witness, but an open voluntary confession. Many difficulties stand in the way of this confession; our natural shrinking from the contempt of the world, and the opposition of the world to Christ. This confession may be made in many ways, not only with the words of our lips, but in all the course of a Christian's life. His self-forgetfulness, his love to others, his desire for their good, are all so contrary to the course of the world, that they become an open confession of Christ. The point here specially brought forward, is confessing that Jesus is the Son of God. Here is the very essence of Christianity. It would have been nothing, had a mere man been crucified; thousands of the human race have died on crosses, and some among the very worst of men; but when that man dying on the cross is the only-begotten Son of God, there is a peculiarity of truth, which deeply affects the whole human race. Whosoever shall confess this, God dwelleth in him. For no man can confess that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Spirit of God. In our dwellings we have provision for our wants;

repose in our weariness, comfort in our troubles ; all this and more than this we have in our God : he supplies all our need, comforts us in all our distress ; and gives us rest in our weariness. Wherever the Christian is, he is, as it were, in God, as in a dwelling-place.

16. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

How the Apostle multiplies his words of love ; it reminds us of those expressions, "Go ye about Sion, mark well her bulwarks, tell the towers thereof." He seems to delight to view these blessed truths on every side. God is love :—These words come before in the 8th verse. "God is light," comes but once, but "God is love" is twice repeated. The love of God is his glory, and we need its repetition in order to explain to us all the hard things that we find in the world. *He is love*, he has really a heart of love to us, his thoughts towards us are full of love and kindness ; he causeth the sun to shine and the rain to fall even on the unjust. But towards his own children how great is the sum of his thoughts ; they are more in number than the sand on the sea-shore, oh how full and how deep is his love !

"*We have known.*" We know it in the work of creation, in the wonders of providence, in the mercies of redemption, and in our daily happy experience of his loving-kindness. We know it in his word, and yet more we shall know it in the glories of his future kingdom. "*And believed.*" The sight of faith goes farther than that of knowledge ; there are many promises of which as yet by experience we know nothing, but which faith embraces ; it is the substance of things hoped for. What a delight it is to know and believe the love of a parent, or of those whom we love and esteem, but oh ! what delight on earth is so great as that of knowing and believing that we are loved of God. May He him-

self give us more and more of this confidence, and the fulness of joy which flows from it.

"*He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.* The same thing was said before of him who confessed that Jesus was the Son of God. Faith worketh by love. What a blessed thing is this, to dwell in love, nothing but thoughts of love, feelings of love, words of love, acts of love towards all; this is dwelling in God. Oh! my family, how beautiful a religion is ours! Only let us seek to attain its full blessedness.

17. *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

The expression "*our love*," is, in the Greek, "love with us," and, as in many other places, it is not very clear whether our love to God, or God's love to us is intended: but perhaps chiefly our love to God. "We have known and believed the love God hath to us," &c. v. 16, and herein is our own love made perfect. It is in dwelling upon the fulness of God's love to us, that we catch the beams of it in our own souls, and then are able to reflect it to others. Our selfishness is overcome and we are brought into the atmosphere of love.

"*That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.*" Here is the most important instruction as to the way in which a sinner may gain boldness in that day. First, by the free love of God to him, and then by the effect that love produces in his own soul. So in Matt. xxv., the saints on the right hand stand with boldness; they forget their own goodness, but the Saviour mentions their deeds of love to him, and expresses his love to them. Oh think what that day will be; how terrible to a guilty sinner, when he stands before the Judge, and all his actions are exposed to the scrutiny of the most holy God, and judged by the rule of His righteous law! what then will it be, for such

a guilty creature to stand there with quietness and confidence, a confidence expressed here by the word *boldness*. Our thoughts, our aims should constantly be directed, to gaining this confidence in the day of judgment. That our love to God may be made perfect, we must look constantly at his love. We may see that love in all the works of providence, all the wonders of nature. We may see it in all our trials, difficulties and perplexities. As the moon, catching the bright blaze of the sun's beams, reflects his light, so the Christian in the bright blaze of God's love, will have God's love reflected from his soul.

"*Because as he is so are we in this world.*" The Apostle adds a reason for this fearlessness, in our oneness of mind with the Judge; we have walked the same course as He who sits upon the throne. As he was animated with love to God, full of self-sacrificing love to man, and yet for that, was hated, persecuted, reviled, so are we. The life of Jesus was one course of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others; so too his Spirit has wrought the same in his people, and taught them to tread in his steps. All real Christians are seeking to be like him in the course of their conduct day by day; doing as He did, speaking as He spake. This gives boldness in the day of judgment; as we gain this perfect love, fear is cast out. Oh! how rich a reward for any little sacrifices which we may be called upon to make. It is true that we follow him at an immense distance, all our graces are but dim reflections of the full blaze of his humility, meekness, holiness, and compassion, yet still Christians are the reflection of his character; as he is, so are we in this world.

18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

We must distinguish here between the different kinds of fear. There is a fear of *reverence*, and a fear of *terror;*

and reverence is consistent with perfect love to God, as we see in the angels in heaven. But terror is quite distinct from this, and where there is terror, there cannot be perfect love; for it is the part of love to have *confidence* in the object beloved; this is an important distinction. Terror may be, and often is, the beginning of religion, and makes men fly to Jesus—the terror of Mount Sinai may often lead men to seek for refuge in Mount Sion; but when their love is perfected, it casts out all the fear of terror. This is what we should seek after, to have the love of God reflected thus in our hearts, and by constant meditation on His love, to throw off all tormenting fear. If we are under the bondage of terror, we go about seeking to establish our own righteousness, and are not made perfect in love. We are to be in a continual progress towards perfection. We are not *perfect* till we see Him face to face, but as every degree of terror shows the imperfection of our love here, so the great remedy is in the glorious love of God to His sinful creatures.

19. *We love him, because he first loved us.*

This is a beautiful truth—if we really know and believe God's love to our souls, we have a powerful motive for loving Him.

"*He loves us.*"—We have ten thousand, thousand proofs of this. Did *we* make this beautiful world? He made it. Did we spread around us all the daily blessings we enjoy? He did this. Every thing in creation tells us, "God loves us," and much more every thing in redemption. Yes, *Calvary* declares most plainly and distinctly, in tones that ought to touch every heart, that the Mighty God loves us. Further, all the promises of future glory declare this truth. And all our own love to Him proceeds from His originating grace. He brings the truth of His love so powerfully home to our souls by His Spirit, that we are constrained to love Him. There is not a being but has

richly partaken of His love—every feeling that animates our bosom should teach us to love God. This love of God vanquishes pride, ingratitude, and every grovelling affection. It is the highest state of man, to be living continually in the exercise of this grace, the love of God.

Now what are the proofs that we love Him?—We shall love His word—we shall love to go to Him in secret prayer, and pour out our hearts before Him, as a child goes to its father. We shall love God's day, His worship, and His people; we should try our hearts by these tests, and be greatly humbled when we consider how much God loves us, and how little we love Him in return.

20. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

There is a great deal of this spirit now in the world. We see it in the Jewish nation of old. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, and therefore they persecuted the Christians. So the Roman Catholics,—their Inquisition is just on this pretence, "*I love God*," and therefore must by every means maintain what I think to be His truth and His Church. It is this fictitious zeal which leads them to "compass sea and land," &c., and there is much the same spirit creeping unawares into our land and Church, in those tainted with Romish tendencies. But with the true love of God, there will ever be a close adherence to His commands, the meekness and gentleness of Christ, compassion to sinners, and a real love to the brethren. It is a device of the devil to divide the two tables of the law. There is also a class who set aside the love of God, and take up the love of man: this is manifested in the infidel spirit of the present day, and it is just as false as the other course. Now in the Christian, these two are joined. He aims to fulfil both; he loves God supremely, and he loves his brother. We see the truth of this text in

ten thousand instances—as in the love of parents and children; they see each other daily, and therefore they love each other. Seeing is the strong inlet to love—from *visible* things we rise to the *invisible*. This is the use of outward means of grace—we have first the earthly signs, and then, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we rise through these to the heavenly substance. So we must rise from love of the creature, to love of the great Creator.

21. *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

He completely seals the great truth, that none can love God without loving his brother also, by showing that to love our brother is God's own command. The constant renewal of this command of God is very striking through the whole Bible—and why is it so repeated? Because of our fallen nature, which has so alienated us from God, and from one another.

Selfishness is the natural feeling of the human heart; and even after our hearts are renewed by grace, the old man will still strive for the victory, and lead us to seek to avoid the law of love; therefore we have the command of this text so often repeated. If, then, we say that we *love God*, we must show it by loving our brother. The word *brother*, in its highest meaning, relates to true Christians, but our love is not to be confined to them: and as regard *relations*, in proportion to the nearness of the relation, will be the strength of our love. But still Christian love must not be confined to our relatives, it must reach to friends, to our Church and our country. It must also embrace every kindred of men through the earth. Our love is to be comprehensive as the love of God. Let us be especially careful to avoid all unkind thoughts of others, because they have not met our wishes, and let us seek to check such feelings by the remembrance of the Divine command. We are to *hate* the *sins* of wicked men, and must seek to put

down sin, but in a spirit of real love to the sinner, pouring out our hearts to God in prayer for them. This is the spirit which will give us real boldness in the day of judgment—which will give us union with the Father of our spirits. God give this love, my dear family, to each of us more and more.

CHAPTER V.

1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

HERE is a distinct evidence whereby we may know that we are born of God—not merely the baptism by water; that is connected with it, as a sign, and used in faith as a means of grace. But not inseparably; many who are born of water, give, by their open wickedness, painful evidence that they are in danger of perishing in their sins. But every one "*that believeth Jesus is the Christ is truly born of God.*" This belief is not a mere notion; it gives a reality to all God has said. "*Believing that Jesus is the Christ,*" is relying on His work of redemption—believing that he lived and died for us. None can do this unless he is born of God, and the Holy Spirit creates him anew, and gives him power to believe. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. If you find that you are trusting only to His merits, and relying on Him entirely for salvation, and are loving Him and confessing Him as your Saviour, then you may be sure you are born of God.

"*And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*" St. John is here farther elucidating the same doctrine of this vital change. The new birth from God leads men to a real love for the children of God;

—and who are they? those belonging to a particular denomination of Christians only? Oh no! children of God may be of any denomination really holding the head, Christ Jesus,—relying on the Lord Jesus, and living to him. The Christian will feel a union with all such, and real love to them.

2. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

He here brings forward the opposite side of the argument. He had before so often mentioned that love to the children of God is a proof of love to Him, and a proof that we are among His people, that it might become a question—how do I know that I love the brethren? Here we see that the two mutually reflect light on each other. So it is all through the Christian life. One grace strengthens another, "The path of the just is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." So I can assure my family, from experience, that the more we know of the ways of Christ, the more joy and comfort we shall find in them. It is important to have every help to the assurance which our text sets before us, because of the doubts that sin engenders. Especially is this valuable in those cases where we have to separate from the children of God.

I believe that there are many such among the different bodies of professing Christians—among Dissenters, Wesleyans, and Tractarians, and even Papists, whom I really love as children of God, but from whom I must separate, where I believe them in error. My love to them is shewn, not by flattering their sins, but when I love God and keep His commandments. The very thing that makes Christians protest against their error, is love to God. His will is superior to every other kind of power in its influences over them. When we love God, we shall have real delight in Him. We shall joy that we have so almighty, so eternal, so rich, tender, gracious, wise and compassionate a

God. We shall rejoice that He is what He is, and that He is *ours*, and this will lead us to keep His commandments: we shall feel sure that One so full of love, would only command what is for our highest happiness—and when we feel this, we have a sure proof that we love the people of God. Let us all seek to realize these precious truths.

3. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.*

John again brings forward the connection between the love of God, and keeping his commandments; He speaks here again like Christ. John xiv. 15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. v. 21. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. v. 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." Nothing is more easy than to profess love; and for a moment the affections may be stirred up. Love with dissimulation is the very character of the world—but the *reality* of love is manifested by our *actions*. Deeds of love are the proof of true love,—when God's law is our rule, and our aim is to do what he commands—this is real love, the love of grateful obedience. We should test our love by this, and see that our profession is not merely the language of temporary and excited feelings, but of a love that makes us tread a self-denying path of obedience.

"*And his commandments are not grievous.*" They are very grievous to the carnal mind. It is very annoying to such a man to deny himself; to read with patient meditation his Bible; pray fervently in secret with realizing faith; but once let the heart be truly converted, and those commandments will "be sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." Love to God is the sweetest and most delightful exercise of the renewed affections. All we want is a converted heart, and true love will not then find the commandments grievous, but delightful.

4. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

The world and the Father are directly opposed to each other, the lusts of the flesh are not of the Father, but are of the world, the friendship of the world is enmity with God. How unspeakably important then is it to know how we may obtain victory over the world!

We are here told, "*Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.*" The Christian has in him two natures, the flesh and the spirit. The worldling has but one nature, the fallen nature, dead in sin, his human reason. This human intellect, though it can discern many outward evils, and contend against them, is still flesh, and opposed to the holy and humbling truths of the Gospel. When we look at the mighty course of the world, we might indeed expect that it would require power from God, something of divine origin, to subdue it. The faith, the love, the heavenly-mindedness of the Christian, all those graces which are the gift of God in his soul, these it is that overcome the world. It is not said *whosoever*, but *whatsoever*, to mark more clearly that it is the divine nature planted in the Christian that overcomes the world.

"*This is the victory, even our faith.*" Faith, among other graces, is specially singled out as overcoming the world. We have a perfect specimen of this in Moses.—By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; here he overcomes the pride of life; he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin; here he overcomes the lust of the flesh; he accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, here he overcomes the lust of the eye. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible; here again he overcomes the dread of man.

By faith he kept the passover ; here he learns to despise the shame and reproach of the gospel. And what is this faith ? It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It sees the glory of reigning with Christ, it sees the full rivers of pleasure in future things, and it learns to estimate at their true value the base things that this world can offer. Would you overcome the world ? fix your eye much on invisible and eternal things.

5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?*

This is a bold question to ask, for great and mighty victories have been attained over pain and suffering and selfish feelings, by the Fakeers of India, the Indians of North America, and many who know nothing of the name of Jesus. But if we consider the full meaning of "the world," as comprising the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, the dread of man's censure, the desire of human applause, then we shall see how nothing but faith can really overcome it, False religion will not do it, a perversion of a true religion will not do it. Monks may have lacerated their flesh with whips, and spikes, and iron girdles ; and still human pride and self-righteousness, and those feelings which are of the world, may have prevailed in their hearts. But if I once believe that the only-begotten Son of God became man, suffered the most cruel agony, and was crucified for me ; then I have that which will stand firm and immoveable as a rock, against the whole brunt, course, stream, and torrent of the world. Look at those, falsely-named Christians, who have denied this great doctrine ; they are remarkable for the worldliness of their whole tone, their reasonings are worldly, and their mind and character worldly. Ask every age, every generation, and you will every where find this great truth confirmed, that it is only when believing that Jesus is the Son of God, we overcome the world.

6. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ*; *not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

The account of this water and blood is given specially in St. John's gospel, where we read that when his side was pierced with a spear, forthwith came there out water and blood. The doctrine is the same as that we had in the first chapter—where he speaks of God as being "just and faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The meaning of the passage seems to be this; the blood to atone, the water to cleanse. "This is He who came by water and by blood," he has indeed proved himself to be the Son of God, by being thus the complete Saviour whom we need. And then we have the power that bears witness of it to our hearts. The Spirit beareth witness;—here is a complete gospel in a few words. "*Not by water only*,"—this is added because the church has always been in danger of neglecting the atonement, of thinking of Christ as one who came to cleanse from unrighteousness, and as a teacher of morality, but to forget his work in pardoning sin. Even among the true children of God, there has often been a tendency to look too exclusively at the work God does in them.

"*Not by water only, but by water and blood.*" The sacraments teach the same lesson; that we are cleansed by water at baptism, to shew us the cleansing of our souls by the Spirit; and nourished at his table by the bread and wine, to shew us the nourishing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ.

"*The Spirit beareth witness.*" First, by the mouth of the Apostles, then by inspiring them to write the Holy Scriptures, and then by throwing light upon those Scriptures, and bearing witness to them as we read.

7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* 8. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

This is a passage concerning which there has been an immense amount of controversy. Before the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, the Bibles were all written; and though God watched over his own word, so that the errors were few, and these for the most part easily corrected by collating different manuscripts, still they were more liable to error than now. Many of those manuscripts are still preserved, and in far the greater number of the earliest this passage stands thus,—"*There are three that bear record, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.*" Were the words, as they stand in our English Bibles, of divine origin, they would be a striking proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; but they are too questionable for us now to use them as the sure word of God. Nor do we need this additional witness: we have sufficient evidence in other parts of Scripture, of the glorious truth that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all take part, and bear witness in the work of our salvation. It would seem as if God left this one passage thus doubtful, to give us fuller confidence in the rest of his word, seeing that out of so many that are clear passages, only one has been thus earnestly disputed.

"*There are three that bear record, ... the Spirit.*" The witness of the Spirit is spoken of in the promises of our Lord, John xvi. 15. "He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you;" he bears witness objectively; taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us; and subjectively, bearing witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God. This witness of the Spirit is spoken of Rom. viii. 14. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received

the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." And as Christ himself was manifested as the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. so the Spirit of holiness which he sends *upon* us, the Spirit of holiness which he works *in* us, prove him to be the Son of God.

"*The water.*" The Messiah had been prophesied of, as one who should cleanse his people. The cleansing, purifying nature of Christ's doctrine, the washing of regeneration, typified by the water in the sacrament of baptism, bears witness unto Him; and every time a child is baptized, there is a fresh testimony borne by the Church to the Divinity of the Saviour.

"*The blood.*"—The sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, which are the life of our souls, received in faith and accompanied by the Spirit, bears witness to the Saviour by its peace-giving influence in our hearts; and by the outward confession of Christ, it bears witness to the world. And the witness of these, the sanctifying Spirit, the cleansing water, the peace-giving blood, all agree in one.

9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.*

We all receive and act upon human testimony;—a child believes the word of a parent, a scholar believes the word of his teacher, a judge and jury receive the testimony of witnesses and judge accordingly; every book we read with concurrence is a receiving of human testimony. If we thus listen to the voice of man, shall we not listen to the voice of God, speaking to us from heaven by the influences of his Spirit, and the appointment of his sacraments, and the grace which he gives to his people in the

use of them? Thus, whether it be the threefold voice of the Spirit, the water and the blood, or the sixfold voice of those who bear record in heaven also, let us receive and obey this testimony of God.

10. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

Faith is the grand distinguishing principle of the child of God: "*He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.*" He believes that he who died for him on Calvary, who suffered on the cross, was really the only-begotten Son of God; and therefore he has full confidence of heart and entire trust in him. Having thus received God's testimony, he has now a witness in himself; this faith works by love, it overcomes sin in his heart, it conquers the world, as we see in Gal. iii. 2. The Spirit comes by the hearing of faith, and then he bears inward witness with our spirits.

"*Whosoever believeth not God hath made him a liar.*" In spite of all the plausible excuses of unbelief, and of all the eloquence and beauty with which infidels have tricked out their writings, they are really mocking God, and giving Him the lie. As far as man can do it, they are bidding defiance to Him, in whom we live and move and have our being. Let us see the awful nature of this sin, that we may avoid the smallest approach to it. Unbelief of all kinds is charging the only true God with falsehood.

11. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.*

"*And this is the record.*" The word here translated *record*, is the same as that rendered *witness* in the preceding verse; it is that testimony of God which we have to credit

and believe, and believing which, we shall have the witness in ourselves. What then is this record? It may be viewed as two-fold, the free gift of eternal life, and the channel through which eternal life is given. Eternal life! what greater blessing can be imagined? we must view it in contrast with eternal death, which is not annihilation, but misery and destruction, sin, guilt, and despair, and that for ever. Eternal life is not merely existence, but a spiritual, blessed and glorious existence in the presence of God, and that for ever. This life is given; nothing we can do can merit it; it is given, freely given to the unworthy. It is a gift already bestowed in Christ; the Son quickeneth whom He will; and here is the condemnation of men—they will not come unto Him, that they may have life; it is all ready in Jesus for them, but they credit not the record. May God Almighty deliver each of us from refusing so great salvation, and give us true faith in his Son.

12. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

See in how short a compass the whole question of eternal life is placed! He that knows that God gave his only-begotten Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification, and so knows it as to credit God's testimony concerning it, and personally to rely on Christ as his complete Saviour,—he hath the Son. Again, *having the Son* is to have daily and hourly communion and fellowship with the Son. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." To *have the Son*, is to have the Spirit of Christ forming in our hearts the image of Christ. He that thus hath the Son, *hath life*. Mark the present tense. We must daily live on Jesus' fulness; all the streams of life flow from Him; severed from Him we can do nothing; united to Him we can do everything.

"*He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*" He

that is content to do without the Son of God, he that is following the world, hath not life. He has never been born again ; he is going to everlasting wrath, and if he turn not, must perish for ever. See then, my dear family, that you have the Son of God ; every thing is a trifle compared with this treasure. He alone is the grand reality of good, securing every other blessing.

13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

There are three progressions here, a weak faith, an assurance of eternal life, and a strong faith. A man may have real faith without knowing that he has eternal life ; and he may know he has eternal life, and yet a higher degree of faith may be desirable and attainable to him. Then see faith as connected with the word of God, "*These things have I written unto you, that ye might believe.*" The word of God, brought home by the Spirit of God, whether written or preached, is the great means of faith. Observe also that this epistle is especially for those who have taken a first step in faith—"I have written *unto you that believe* in the name of the Son of God."

"*That ye may know that ye have eternal life.*" See how assurance, which so many condemn or despise, is set before us as a high Christian privilege and attainment. So St. Paul says, "*we know that,* if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, *we have* a building of God." One spiritual blessing helps on and strengthens another ;—assurance, peace, and joy in believing, strengthen faith. Thus the Christian goes on from strength to strength ; first a babe, then a young man, then a father in Christ.

14. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.*

Confidence toward God, or, as it might be rendered, boldness, is specially set before us in this epistle. If we know that we have eternal life,—if we believe on the name of the Son of God, we have peace and confidence toward God, we know that he is our friend, and really loves us, and cares for us. He has a father's heart toward us, He is always ready to attend to us. Yes, He appoints every thing that concerns us; every trial and sorrow, every event and circumstance, is only the method infinite power and wisdom and love is taking for our happiness. Nay more, He tenderly sympathizes with all our griefs; His ear is always open to our complaint. Nor is it any limitation, but rather a blessed addition, and enlargement, that it is added, "*according to his will.*"—for what is His will? His will is that we should be saved,—that we should be blessed. He is not willing that any should perish. He wills that His creatures should be eternally blessed in Him. His will is our sanctification; we are blind, ignorant creatures, we know not whether what we ask will be good for us, or injurious to us; what a blessed assurance then, that He answereth us, when we ask "*according to his will.*" Whatsoever it be that we ask, whether for our bodies, for our circumstances, for our families, for our souls, for our growth in grace, or for our eternal glory, if it be according to His will, He heareth us.

15. *And if ye know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*

St. John has been setting before us the two conditions of prevailing prayer, confidence in God, and asking according to His will. In the next verse he implies that these con-

ditions are the reason, why we should not pray for men in a certain state among Christians,—those who sin unto death,—because we cannot tell that God's will will be to save them, and in every prayer a Christian should have confidence that God will give him what He asks. This seems the connection with what has gone before and with what follows. Now let us examine it more closely.

"*If we know that he hear us.* There are several grounds on which, if we have confidence in Him, and ask according to His will, we may know that He hears us. We may be sure of it, because the will of God shall absolutely be done, in opposition to the power of men, or of devils. We may be sure of it, because we know He loves us. We may be sure of it, because the prevailing desire of a Christian's mind is, that the will of God should be done ; he desires every thing else in subordination to that. So our blessed Saviour in the garden, "Father, if it be possible, remove this cup from me ; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." The request was granted, not in the removal of the cup, but in strength given Him to drink the cup to the very dregs. My dear family, our great failing,—I am sure I speak for myself as well as for others,—is the little time and the little heart we give to prayer. We believe it is a duty, sometimes we enjoy it as a privilege, but we have no adequate idea of the power, the prevalence, the strength, the majesty of prayer ; and because we are so backward to prayer, God has given us so many commands, and so many promises, "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find." Oh may we daily increase and abound in prayer, knowing that whatsoever we ask according to His will, He heareth us.

16. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death ; I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

Having established the principle that a Christian asking

in prayer what is according to the will of God, should have full confidence, and be quite sure that his request will be granted; he supposes a case of an apostate, an infidel, one possessed of a Cain-like spirit, hateful and hating, persevering in a hardened rejection of the truth. For such an one St. John says "*I do not say that he shall pray.*" *He* had no certainty, no secure ground of hope, that his prayer would be answered. This is one awful consequence of persevering, open wickedness,—that we lose the prayers of God's children. As on the one hand, any mark of grace, any working of faith, hope or love in those around him, increases the earnestness of a Christian's prayer for them; so on the other hand when he sees them entirely given up to worldliness and ungodliness, his hopes and prayers grow weaker and fainter.

"*But if any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall pray, and He shall give him life,*" &c. A Christian brother cannot sin unto death, as we see in verse 18. In one sense, indeed, all sin is unto *death*. Sin in thought incurs the penalty of the law, and the wages of sin is death; but the expression here means that deadly sin, which implies a state of spiritual death in an apostate from the truth, from which there is no recovery. This a child of God is secured from. He may be overcome by the strength of temptation, and fall into awful sin. David did and was recovered; and no doubt prayers were offered by many an Israelite for him. If any brother thus sin, "*he shall ask, and He shall give Him life.*" Oh with what tenderness then should we watch over each other, exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day.

17. *All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death.*

He here distinguishes between the sin of wilful apostasy or hardened infidelity, and those sins of God's children which are deeply repented of and forsaken. We have an

exact picture of the two cases in Judas and Peter. Judas sinned with wilful premeditation, through hatred of Christ and his truth ; he sinned unto death, and departed and went and hanged himself. Peter, surprised by temptation, fell into grievous sin, denying his Master with oaths and curses ; but he sinned not unto death. The Lord turned and looked upon him, and he wept bitterly.

18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

If this were not written in the Bible, what presumption men would call it. It is no presumption to be assured of our salvation, and that we belong to the Lord. See here the doctrine of final perseverance ; those who are born or begotten of God cannot sin unto death, cannot fall away into final apostasy. Then observe the doctrine clearly established, that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable ; taking regeneration in its strictest, highest sense, as denoting an inward and spiritual change in the heart of man. We see multitudes of unhappy souls who are baptized ; going on in worldliness and perishing in their guilt. See also the holiness of the doctrines of grace,—he that is born of God sinneth not. He cannot continue in open, wilful, and habitual sin.

"*But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself.*" We generally find, that where the doctrines of grace are most clearly stated, human responsibility is immediately brought in. So in that passage "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you," —so here, "*keepeth himself.*" It does not mean that he is not kept of God—that is stated in innumerable places. "My Father which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 29. "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

1 Peter i. 5. But he keepeth himself by watchfulness, by prayer, by diligence in the means of grace.

"*And that wicked one toucheth him not.*" He goeth about seeking whom he *may* devour, and he wages perpetual war with the children of God; therefore we are commanded, "whom resist, stedfast in the faith." But he has no power to injure or destroy them; he is entirely under the control of our Lord and Saviour.

19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

What a position this is: the little flock of Christ, and the whole world against them. Do not say, this is the language of self-sufficiency and pride; no! it is the language of conscious knowledge, of deep humility, of tender compassion, and of lively gratitude; and, being in the Bible, it is infallible, inspired truth, appropriate to all God's true children.

"*We know that we are of God.*" We are born of God, we belong to God, we are chosen of Him before the foundation of the world, we choose God for our portion and our happiness; His will, His mind, and His character, are our aim and our joy. Oh what a standing this gives us! how it raises us above the changes and troubles and difficulties of life! Then on the other hand, "*the whole world lieth in wickedness,*" or "*in the wicked one.*" What strength there is in the expression! so far from not touching them, as in the preceding verse, they are nursed by the devil, he holds them in his arms, and carries them as he pleases. The world is led captive by him at his will. He is the God of this world; he is the prince of the power of the air. True it is that Satan is more and more being dispossessed. But alas, there is a world in the church; the great mass of professing Christians are following the course of this world; Christ's flock is a little flock. The neutral ground is however diminishing, it is more and more taking away, and

we must ultimately either belong to God, or have the devil for our ruler.

20. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

We know it not merely by the evidence we have of it in the establishment of Christianity in our land, and in the world;—not merely because it is ascertained as an historical fact, more certainly than any other historical fact; but we know it, because we have experienced it in our own hearts. He has given us promises; we have believed them, applied for them, obtained them. We know that He lived in our nature, died in that nature for our sins, rose with that nature from the dead, ascended into heaven, and there liveth to make intercession for us; we know these things, for we have had inward experience of their power, and reality, and sweetness.

"*And hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true.*" This was the grand object of Christ's coming—to manifest to the children of men the God of truth. He says "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." So to reveal God to men, that they might confide in Him, turn to Him, and rejoice in His love, was the great end for which He came. This is the knowledge which beggars all other knowledge; this is the knowledge which makes the poorest pauper who possesses it infinitely better off than the most learned of the world who possess it not. Then observe, in order that we may have this knowledge, the Son of God must *give* us an understanding—it does not come by knowledge of science, and literature, and languages—it is the gift of God. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Eph. i. 18.

"*And we are in Him that is true.*" Observe the contrast, "*The whole world lieth in the wicked one;*"—"*we are in Him that is true.*" The world is empty and false, a painted show worked by the devil, to catch silly souls, with the prospect of present advantage. Ours is a reality, we have chosen the true God as our portion. He has chosen us as His children, "*even in His Son Jesus Christ.*"

I do not suppose that the phrase, "*Him that is true,*" refers to our Lord Jesus Christ; but St. John would state that it is through Christ alone, through His atoning blood, His whole mediation and intercession, we can be in the Father.

"*This is the true God, and eternal life.*" Christ is one with the Father, we are one with him, and that is the true and proper rest for our souls. This is eternal life,—spiritual life here,—eternal glory yet to come.

21. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

What is an idol? not merely the heathen deities by which the early Christians were surrounded; we may make idols of lawful things, when we give our whole hearts to them, so as to destroy our communion with God. Thus we make an idol of a false system of religion, and even of true doctrine, when we magnify and exaggerate any particular doctrine. All kinds of worldly things may be idolized. How many idolize music, or drawing, or learning of various kinds! How many idolize wealth and honour and pleasure! This world is full of idols. Now the last words this blessed Apostle has left with the church are, "*Keep yourselves from idols,*" let God have the supreme place in your affections.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

THIS Epistle is attributed by the general tradition of the Church to the Apostle St. John, and bears many internal marks of being his writing.

1. *The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.*

By the title "*the elder*," we see it was written by him in his old age, to encourage a Christian lady. We have not only Epistles to great cities, as those to the Romans and Corinthians;—to large countries, as that to the Galatians, and many others to distinguished ministers in the Church, as Titus and Timothy, but the spirit comes down to private individuals, and addresses the *elect Lady*, and the well-beloved Gaius. It has been supposed, that the word translated *Lady*, is in reality, a proper name, Kyria, and that the Apostle addresses by name, some lady in distinguished circumstances, who had hospitably received the ministers of the Gospel.

"*And her children.*"—It is well when children walk in the steps of their parents, as Timothy did in those of Lois and Eunice. This holy Apostle, my dear children, would

have children give their young hearts to Christ. The address "to the elect Kyria," here, is an answer to those who would say that God may elect nations to special privileges, but not individuals to spiritual blessings.

"*Whom I love in the truth.*" There are many bonds of union which bring men together; there are commercial bonds, partnerships in business, neighbourhood, mutual sympathy of disposition, and many others, but there is no bond that unites like the bond of the truth. First, there is the truth of our common fall and ruin, which binds us together in a bond of common sympathy. Again, there is the doctrine of our common redemption;—persons rescued together from some common shipwreck or burning house, get a bond of union and affection together. Much more may those be united, who have shared in the redemption and deliverance wrought out for all by Jesus Christ. But there is not only the common ruin and the common redemption; all Christians are born again, they are renewed by the same Spirit, and this gives a thousand fresh points of union, holy tempers, and dispositions in which all agree. Then too, there is the common hope of glory, the same kingdom of Christ set before all; other unions, however close, must be dissolved, here is a union that is eternal. In the original, it is "*whom I love in truth*," without the article, as if the Apostle would include a double idea, that which we have been considering, and which is brought out more fully afterwards, and also the idea, whom I love truly, "*in truth.*"

2. *For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*

"*For the truth's sake.*" Truth unites—error divides; but truth, holiness, and love, are all uniting. The truth shall advance and conquer, and as it advances, the happiness of man shall also increase; for as truth advances, the glory of God is advanced, the kingdom of Christ prospers.

Truth begets love. My dear family, follow after the truth, and you shall have the love of the lovers of truth, that is, of the very best of the human race.

"*Which dwelleth in us.*" "Thy word is truth." The word of God dwells in the believer; "in his law doth he meditate day and night." One token of the life and freshness of religion in a believer's soul, is the manner in which daily occurrences suggest some Scripture truth to the mind. Scripture truths are ever rising up in the heart of a lively Christian.

"*And shall be with us for ever.*" How full the Scripture is of testimonies to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints;—they shall never perish;—"he that has begun a good work, will carry it on until the day of Christ."

3. *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

"*Grace, mercy, and peace.*" Mercy seems to be especially named in the epistles to private individuals. In the case of those holding the responsible office of the ministry, or that of the mother of a large family, we can easily understand the cause of the addition. The Spirit is never mentioned in these opening prayers of the epistles, it is always from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps this is, because the blessings asked are the first fruits of the Spirit, and prove that he, when they are given, is really present with us.

"*Grace,*"—Free favour to the unworthy; "*mercy,*" that which has a special reference to our state as sinners, and "*peace,*" the enjoyment of mercy and grace. How sweet are the names here given to our God.

"*The Father.*" The father of all by creation, the father of all his adopted and regenerate children.

"*The Son of the Father, in truth and love.*" The highest

attainment we can reach is truth joined with love, and love joined with truth; an attainment so perfectly reached by our blessed Saviour; and to which he means to bring us. Oh may we in this and everything follow him!

4. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*

It seems that some of the children of Kyria were separated from her, and the Apostle having met with them and found them walking in the truth, writes to the mother, knowing that nothing would so much rejoice her heart. Children are weak, and yet they think themselves strong; they are ignorant, and yet they think they know every thing; what a blessed thing it is then, when the Holy Spirit leads them to walk in the truth, and daily to conform to the truths of God which are taught them.

"*I rejoiced greatly.*" The holy Apostle and their mother would rejoice, they gave joy to the mother whom they loved above every thing, and to the pastor who watched over them; here is a motive to a child full of tenderness, to walk in the truth. But why was it that their obedience would occasion this joy? It was because their mother and the Apostle had a deep and real love to them, and were desiring their best good, and they knew that this was only attained by obedience to God.

5 *And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.*

"*I beseech thee, Lady.*" Kyria was a most devoted woman, she had already attained a remarkable spirit of love; why does the Apostle find it necessary to beseech and entreat of her to dwell in love? First, because love is such a blessed grace, it has in it heights, and depths, and lengths,

and breadths, beyond what we have yet attained to. And secondly, because there are so many hindrances in the way of love, there is such a distraction of work and business, such jarring interests ; there is such a variety of different characters, each having their own peculiar gift ; that it is hard to maintain full harmony and affection. Therefore love must be continually urged upon us.

"*Not as though I wrote a new commandment.*" Abel was rewarded for love, and Cain was punished for hatred in the very beginning. But, as we find in 1 John ii. in some respects it was a new commandment. Our Saviour by his example has given it a new force and obligation.

6. *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.*

Love is the fulfilling of the law ; the first table of the law requires nothing but the love of God ; and love to God will work obedience to the second table, love to man.

"*This is love, that we walk after his commandments.*" If we have love to God we shall have no other God ; we shall make no graven images, nor take His name in vain, nor break His sabbaths : if we have love to man, we shall honour our parents, we shall not kill, nor steal, nor break any of the laws of the second table. The same truth is set forth in the 1st Epistle of John ii. 5. "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected ; hereby know we that we are in him." Chap. v. 3. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments : and his commandments are not grievous."

We see here the necessity of watchfulness to maintain the grace of love. Kyria was a holy loving woman, her children also were full of love, yet the apostle feels it not unadvisable to exhort her to persevere in love. As in a garden you may sow good seed, flowers, and vegetables, yet without constant watchfulness, the noxious weeds

grow up, and you will have to sow good seed again and again ;—so, though there be love in the heart, yet the noxious, hateful weed of selfishness, which so abounds there, will be perpetually growing up ; and divine love is alas ! an exotic in our fallen nature.

7. *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an Antichrist.*

This is in harmony with the 4th chapter, 1st and 2nd verses, of the first epistle, with this difference, that there the Greek word rendered "*come,*" relates to a past event : here it might be more properly rendered, "Jesus Christ coming in the flesh," which may be viewed in both aspects, as relating to His Incarnation, which is past, and to His return, which is future. This is the truth which Antichrist either openly denies, or inwardly disbelieves. It is the upholding of the great doctrine of Jesus, come in the flesh, ascended into heaven, and coming again to judge the world, which specially marks the faithful witness of the truth of God. This description of Antichrist, comes home directly to the church of Rome ; all its falsehoods have a bearing on this leading error, denying the human and sympathizing feelings of Christ, setting him aside, looking on him as a hard judge, needing to be propitiated by His Virgin Mother, making her the tender and compassionate mediator.

"*This is a deceiver and an Antichrist,*" or rather, emphatically, the deceiver and the Antichrist. We have at present chiefly seen its first form, denying that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, because the doctrine of the second coming has been as yet so feebly proclaimed in the church ; but let it be freely and fully set forth, and the infidel objection will soon arise, "Where is the promise of his coming ?"

8. *Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*

Observe, there are some things which a Christian has already wrought or gained; an open profession of religion, and the reputation among his fellow-men, of loving God and doing good to others; he has already run in the heavenly race, and already overcome many temptations. He who has gained nothing, has nothing to lose, but he who has gained much, has a great deal to lose, and it is an awful consideration that it is possible to lose the things that we have wrought. Judas had gained much, he was an apostle, he preached Christ to others, but by suffering covetousness to get into his heart, he lost all. Though it is promised to the true children of God," The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," yet this preservation will be granted in the way of diligence and watchfulness, not of idleness and presumption: "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." But besides the danger of losing what we have wrought, there is an animating motive set before us, "*that we obtain a full reward;*" a most important part of Christian doctrine it is, that every thing we do for Christ here, will meet with a reward of grace. What is that reward? a glorified body, a perfected spirit, pure as Christ is pure, to be the companion of angels, to reign as kings and priests on the earth; here is something of the reward. The Apostle includes himself in their reward, "*we* shall receive &c," so in another place, "What is our glory, and joy, and crown of rejoicing? are not even ye, &c." The more useful and profitable we are to others, the more blessed and glorious we shall be ourselves.

9. *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

"*Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.*" The doctrine of Christ I suppose eminently refers to the whole truth of "Jesus coming in the flesh:" that mystery of mysteries which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions,—the Divine Being, the only-begotten Son of God, equal with the Father, tabernacling in human flesh. Round this centre-truth all the other doctrines revolve; the doctrine of our fallen nature, our ruined condition, our inability to help ourselves, the utter ruin impending over us, all these are a part of the doctrine of Christ. This doctrine we are to *abide* in. St. Paul says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." A continual dwelling in Christ, offering every prayer in His name, whatever we do in word or deed, doing all in the name of Jesus—here is abiding in the doctrine of Christ. But this is not sufficient, there is an intimate connection between doctrine and practice, between faith and obedience, the two things are requisite. Unbelief on the one hand, and a sinful life on the other, show that a man "*hath not God.*" What is included in this? We shall better understand it, if we consider what it is to *have God*. Abraham *had God*, He was his shield and his exceeding great reward. Enoch had God, he walked with God; to dwell in Christ is to have God, for He is the express image of His person; and whoso throws off the Son, throws off the Father also. May we, my dear family, so dwell in Jesus, as to have communion and fellowship both with the Father and the Son, for "*he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son.*" He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, or in other words, in whose heart Christ dwells by faith; or, in another form, who having received Christ

Jesus the Lord, *walks* in Him ; or, in another form, he who eateth the flesh of the Son of man and drinks his blood—he who in his weakness looks to Christ for strength ; in his perplexities, looks to Christ for guidance ; in his sorrow, looks to Christ for comfort ; he who leans upon Christ, who is complete in Christ, and to whom Christ is all in all ; such a one hath the Father. He hath Him, in that he has his favour, in that he has his love, in that he has communion and fellowship with Him. The Father is his portion, his companion, his friend, his guide, his refuge, his protector. Between him and the Father there is conciliation and peace ; but not only so, he hath both the Father and the Son, he hath separate communion and fellowship with the different persons of the Holy Trinity.

"*And he hath the Son*," and so has spiritual and eternal life. He has a connexion with the Son, as intimate as the connexion between the member and the body, the branch and the vine, the stone and the building. Now, my dear family, get clear scriptural views of these things. There are many errors afloat in our day. On the one hand men are saying, unless you belong to my particular denomination you are not right ; on the other hand, men in another church are saying, all who do not agree with them, are left to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Now the Bible soars above all these distinctions, and makes the matter of grand importance, *abiding in the doctrine of Christ*. There are those who abide in the doctrine of Christ, in all denominations holding the Head, they are our brethren and sisters, fellow-heirs with us of the same glory.

10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.*

"*If there come any into your house, and bring not this doctrine*." Though the commandment of Christ is, that we love one another, and that we use hospitality without

grudging, yet if any bring not the doctrine of Christ, we are not to receive him into our house: see here the depth and wisdom of real love. I may show a man who is in error more real love by frowning on him, than by being kind to him. We must not tamper with error, nor be led away by the incidental good with which it is mixed, to express our approbation of it. It is of the first importance to preserve the purity of the Gospel; not only "*receive him not into your house*," but "*neither bid him God speed*," that is, withhold the usual salutations,—do not bestow upon him the ordinary greetings of a well-wisher.

11. *For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.*

He becomes in the eyes of others associated with them, and observe how *not abiding in the doctrine of Christ* is called an evil deed, because it is the root of all evil deeds. May God give us a great sensibility of the evil of vital errors, with a large allowance for differences in lesser things; as we see in Rom. xiv.

12. *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.*

"*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink.*" But is it not a pity that we have not these "many things" written down? There is a mercy in the limitations, as well as in the fulness of Revelation; when a vessel is full, all the water which is poured in afterwards, is wasted; there is enough in the Bible to fill every vessel, enough to make us wise unto salvation, enough for our growth in grace, enough to lead us to glory, by and bye our vessels will be enlarged, then we shall know even as we are known.

"*But I trust to come unto you, and speak to you face to face;*" and we too, if children of God, hope to go to St. John, and speak face to face; we shall assuredly see him, and have the joy of communion with him, and that too in glorified bodies, when the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

"*That our joy may be full.*" We all know, when we are separated from each other, how pleasant correspondence is, but the pleasure of a letter is soon over, it is not to be compared with *being* together, and talking face to face; and, after all, so mingled with infirmity and interruption is our communion here, that we must wait for fulness of joy till we come to our Father's presence above.

13. *The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.*

I suppose this was a sister of Kyria's by nature as well as by grace, but you see how individual personal election, that truth which the world can so little bear, is repeatedly brought forward in the word of God.

Greetings are pleasant, even here on earth; but far more delightful will be the greetings of the children of God in heaven.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

We have here another beautiful little Epistle of St John, like the last, written to a private individual, but full of spiritual instruction.

1. *The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

"*The elder, unto the well-beloved Gaius.*" What a simple title St. John here takes to himself! He was the last of the Apostles, that venerable Apostle whom Jesus loved, yet he merely styles himself "*the elder*." Gaius was a man of wealth, influence, and property, who, like Abraham, consecrated all to God. This is the way to be beloved; love is the most fruitful grace in the world, it is sure to beget love.

"*Whom I love in the truth.*" The article is not in the original Greek, but I think our translators have caught the sense of the original, in rendering it so; not merely whom I love *truly*, but whom I love "*in the truth;*" and of all bonds the bond of truth is the firmest and strongest, In proportion as you become imbued with Bible truth, in that proportion will you have links of connexion with all classes of Christians, all over the world. Buy the truth then, at

the cost of earnest prayer, and patient diligent investigation of the Scriptures, for Bible truth is the thing which makes Christians one, however they may differ in outward circumstances.

2. *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

"*Beloved, I wish above all that thou mayest prosper.*"—He had in the verse before, called Gaius, "*well-beloved;*" but true love fears no tautology. Instead of the usual salutation of "grace and peace," St. John, in the fulness of his love, wishes him generally "*prosperity;*" prosperity in every thing, body and soul. But we find that, while Gaius' soul was prospering, his body was weakly, he had trials and afflictions; so it often is, the Christians who have had the heaviest trials are the most heavenly-minded. This is the bright and sunny side of our afflictions, to consider that they are all working for our good. Let us examine, more minutely, what soul-prosperity is, and the signs and marks of it. It is a sign of soul-prosperity, when a spirit of prayer is given to us, when every thing brings us to prayer, and we walk with God through the day. It is a sign of soul-prosperity, when we are full of love, putting charitable constructions on the conduct of others, making allowance for them, "hoping all things, believing all things, enduring all things." It is a mark of soul-prosperity, when, as we grow upward in usefulness, we grow downward in humility, when our faith grows, when hope is lively, when patience and forbearance are maintained. These are a few marks; many more might be added.

But if Gaius' soul thus prospered, why did St. John wish above all things that he might prosper? Because his body was sickly and infirm, and weakness of body is a real impediment to our extensive usefulness. A Christian, on his sick-bed, may be gaining great personal benefit, and be a great comfort and blessing to those immediately about

him, but a Christian in health and vigour, able to enter into all the duties of life, is a more extended blessing. Christian love is sympathizing love, it does not say in a rough way, 'Oh, your illness is very good for you, and you ought to be thankful for it.' No, St. John cared for the bodily health of Gaius, and prayed that it might correspond to the prosperity of his soul.

3. *For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.*

Observe first the character of Gaius—the truth was "in him," he had made it his own. There is truth in the Bible, there is truth in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now the great thing for us is, to get the truth from the fountain, or the vessels where God has treasured it, into our own vessel. Besides having the truth in him, Gaius *walked in the truth;* he had a sanctifying as well as an intellectual knowledge. Knowledge of the truth and walking in the truth, mutually sustain and enlarge each other—"if any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine." This was the character of Gaius.

Then the brethren "*came and testified of him.*" Oh, if we were to talk more of the good that is in others, and less of their faults, it would be much better for our spirit; but we have such corrupt hearts, so proud and sensitive to any thing like slight or injury, so envious and jealous of any thing like good done to others; I am afraid we are very much below the spirit of these primitive brethren. The joy this occasioned to St. John is striking.

"*I rejoiced greatly.*" He does not say, "because I am the oldest and most venerable apostle; because I am the head of the Christian Church; because of the honours Christ has put upon me." Still less does he rejoice in talents, or rank, or good things of this world, but he says, "*I rejoiced greatly*" to hear of the "*truth that is in thee.*"

What an amiable, lovely, benevolent joy is this! We may ascertain our own state very much, by seeing what are the things which give us joy.

4. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.*

I do not know that St. John was ever married, but he had a large family of children, spiritual children, whom he had begotten in the bonds of the gospel, and to whom he was a spiritual father. Now these were his dear children. I, too, wish to have many families of such, besides my own dear children at home.

St. John had the comfort of hearing of his spiritual children, that they were "*walking in the truth;*" walking implies a steady progression, in contrast to every thing like backsliding; to "*walk in the truth,*" is to adorn in every thing the doctrine of God our Saviour. This gave the apostle the greatest joy; let us see some of the causes of that joy. It gave him joy mainly and chiefly because it brought glory to God; nothing glorifies God so much as when God's children walk in the truth. It gave him joy, as it advanced the cause of the gospel; their consistent conduct commended the truth to others. It gave him joy, because as a spiritual father he loved his children and desired their happiness, and he knew that nothing was so constant and deep a spring of happiness as walking in the truth. It gave him joy, lastly, because it was a part of his own eternal glory and happiness. Let us lay this to heart then, and give joy to our minister, glory to God, increase to the gospel, and happiness to ourselves, by walking in the truth.

5. *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers.*

"*Beloved, thou doest faithfully.*" How the Bible abounds

in addresses of love ; our Church in the spirit of the Bible, addresses us "dearly-beloved brethren." We have all talents given us by Christ to use in his service, and it is required in a steward that he be found faithful. Gaius used his talents faithfully.

"*Whatsoever thou doest unto the brethren and unto strangers.*" I suppose "*the brethren*" means the poor disciples who dwelt in his immediate neighbourhood ; "*the strangers,*" those brethren who came to him from a distance. First, you see, Gaius provided for the brethren, then for the strangers ; this is the right order in our works of love, first to do good in our own circle, but not to stop there ;—to seek the good of our country, of our Church, of the whole Church of Christ, of the world. Oh, may you all be faithful in works of love !

6. *Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church, whom, if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.*

"*Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church.*" Great objections have been raised against Religious Societies, because they publish a list of their subscribers ; the objections will be silenced or greatly qualified by remembering this text. Our light must shine before men, that they may see our good works ; and real Christian love will tell out the love that there is in others ; and as the spirit of the world is to talk of people's faults behind their back, the spirit of the Christian should be to testify in their absence, of the good that is in them.

"*Whom if thou shalt bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.*" Those who have journeyed for Societies have often found how well it is to be thus brought forward on their journey *after a godly sort*, by the church. There are a thousand springs of blessing in it ; the union, the comfort of love, the fellowship, and the mutual knowledge of each other this gives to Christians, with

the opportunity of family instruction and prayer. All these private benefits, besides the more public blessings of preaching and speaking for the good of the Church at large, shew us something of what is meant in being brought forward on a journey after a godly sort. And see what a stamp God puts upon efforts of this kind to diffuse His gospel.

"*Thou shalt do well.*" The formalist and worldling say, Thou shalt do ill, it is all enthusiasm; the covetous man says, Thou shalt do ill. Well, let us be content with God's smile, whoever may frown upon works of love and mercy.

7. *Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*

"*Because that for his name's sake they went forth.*" How striking and beautiful is each expression, "*for His name's sake,*"—constrained by the love of Jesus, and gratitude to Him, that precious name which is as ointment poured forth; this is the motive which in this day sends forth our most valuable missionaries. In this spirit the mission to New Zealand and the mission to Africa, and all the now wide-spread missions among the Heathen were undertaken, —for His name's sake they went forth.

"*Taking nothing of the Gentiles.*" The merchant leaves his country and toils laboriously in foreign lands, in the pursuit of wealth, but the missionary has no such end in view of enriching himself: he seeks to enrich others with spiritual blessings. But is not this madness? The world says so; but let us contrast the end of the two courses.

The worldly man returns to his country full of riches, but often with shattered health, which prevents much enjoyment of them; and at best, in a few years he dies, and if he has neglected Christ, he carries nothing with him, he parts from all good for ever. The missionary carries the knowledge of Christ to heathen lands, plants churches,

which are springs of blessing to generation after generation ; he pleases God, he has his approbation, and at death, enters into his joy for ever. Which course, in a sober view of the whole case, is most wise and reasonable ?

8. *We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.*

See what a gracious provision our blessed Saviour has made for those, who for His name's sake have gone forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. He has caused to be recorded in His word, which every child of God obeys, this command. There is no choice left to His people, as to whether they shall help in missionary exertions or not ; the Bible says we *ought* to receive such : to receive them in our affections, to receive them in our prayers, to receive them (where we can) into our houses. How it shows the fulness of our blessed Saviour's love, that He has thus made provision for the diffusion of His truth. He would have every human being whom He has redeemed, know how God their Father loves them, and has given His Son to die for them. And how great is His love, in the office which He puts upon us, of being "*fellow-helpers to the truth*." There is no joy like the joy of benevolence, no happiness like doing good to others, and of all kinds of doing good, none can possibly be compared to spreading the Gospel. It gives men peace, and pardon, and comfort, and happiness here ;—godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. And a day is coming, when all the fellow-helpers of the truth shall meet together, and then it will be found that he that winneth souls is wise, and "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

9. *I wrote unto the church : but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among you, receiveth us not.*

A remarkable instance this of the length to which the love of power will carry a man. Here was St. John, the last surviving apostle, he whom Jesus loved, and yet this Diotrephes thought to set himself up above him. How could he do this ? By the affectation, I suppose, of superior sanctity. By some system of will-worship ; perhaps by persuading the church that St. John was in his dotage ; so that when St. John had written to the Church the first of these epistles, Diotrephes did not receive him. We have something of the same spirit abroad in our day. I do believe this spirit enters very much into Popery and Tractarianism. Ambitious, self-righteous, self-sufficient men did not like to see simple-hearted Christians rising in reputation, nor carrying forward Bible and Missionary Societies with so much energy, and so they thought to gain the pre-eminence, by magnifying antiquity, and multiplying outward forms.

10. *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

We have a most exact description of Popery—first, not receiving the word of God, endeavouring in every way to suppress the Bible ; then, in its spirit of persecution, not receiving the brethren, and faithful children of God, as we see in the times of the Waldenses and Albigenses. But not only so, Popery forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. In the books of the canons and councils of the Romish church, this work of Satan

is clearly laid down, as if it were a duty to God. There are severe threatenings against those, who would receive the persecuted children of God into their houses, or in any way trade and have communication with them. We can have little idea of these things in England, but in the countries of Europe we see how Popery lords it over God's heritage, promotes all idolatry, and destroys and devastates all around, by the poisonous breath of its false doctrine.

11. *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

"*Beloved, follow not that which is evil but that which is good.*" There is in us all a great tendency to imitate and copy the conduct of others, and we are too apt to leave the good and copy the bad, because copying the bad is quite agreeable to our carnal hearts. Pride says, *follow the bad*, selfishness says, *follow the bad;* worldliness says, *follow the bad.* Now, in opposition to all this, God gives us a plain command, *follow not that which is evil, but that which is good:* and we have every day to choose between the good and the evil; but the motive which is given us is sufficiently strong.

"*He that doeth good is of God, he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*" We cannot do good of ourselves. It shews that we are of him, when we are doing good. Nor can we be doing evil while God is with us and we see him. But the moment we lose sight of God, the downward path of evil opens to us.

12. *Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record: and ye know that our record is true.*

"*Demetrius hath good report of all men.*" The Apostle

will not mention an apostate Diotrephes, without giving a counterpart in the consistent conduct of Demetrius. But is it not said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you?" Yes, but the "*all men*" in that case includes all worldly men; here it refers probably more especially to the Church, to Christian men, though by well-doing Christians will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Demetrius possibly had plenty of enemies out of the Church, and yet there is such a thing as a Christian by his consistent steady perseverance in well-doing, living down much of the opposition and enmity even of the world; this we have seen to be the case with many of God's most eminent servants.

"*And of the truth itself.*" A good report is truly blessed when we truly deserve it. "*Yea, and we also bear record, and ye know that our record is true.*" This is nothing less than the seal of divine approbation stamped upon Demetrius during his life-time, in reward of his consistent piety; for John wrote by divine authority. And now, my dear family, see the real way to pre-eminence, in the contrast between these two men. Diotrephes loved the pre-eminence, sought it by carnal means, and he is branded with Divine reprobation, and his name handed down as an odious name for ever. Demetrius looked not on his own things, but on the things of others; walked in the way of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and he attained the pre-eminence which he never sought, the seal of approbation from God, and from his fellow Christians.

13. *I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:* 14. *But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.*

How St. John thirsts after full Christian communion! When we love others deeply, we like to open our hearts to them, and oh what union there will be when our hearts

are quite filled with deep thoughts of God and Christ, and eternity! *Now* our communion is too much about outward and visible things. Let us grow in grace, and our communion will become more blessed continually.

Peace be to thee. Like the Saviour's legacy—"My peace I give unto you." St. John, treading in his steps, breathes only peace.

Our friends salute thee. Christianity is no enemy to the courtesies of life. It rather encourages and fosters them, saying, Be courteous to all.

Greet the friends by name. It was doubtless a long list, as we may see by St. Paul's list at the close of the epistle to the Romans, but he would have no individual excluded. Let us also have our lists of friends to mention in our prayers at the throne of grace.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.

1. *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.*

"*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ.*"—We have only one epistle of Jude, or Judas, but it is one full of practical instruction, and peculiarly suited to the present times. He styles himself a servant of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul does, Phil. i. 1. "Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ," as if to say, I am commissioned by Christ to write these things to you; the message is from Him; thus stamping his epistle with the Divine authority of him whose servant he was.

"*And brother of James.*"—It was well in the true servant of the Lord, thus to distinguish himself from Judas the traitor. He shows also his relationship to James, the Author of the epistle. My dear family, ever be fellow-helpers to the truth.

"*To them that are sanctified by God the Father.*" Sanctification is commonly referred to the Holy Ghost, but we frequently see in the Holy Scriptures, the work of one person of the Blessed Trinity ascribed to another, so perfect is the unity and oneness between them: God the Father sanctifies us, as He gives us to the Lord Jesus,

sends us His word, His ministers, His Son, and especially as He gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask.

"*Preserved in Jesus Christ.*" We have the same truth in the tenth of John, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." What a precious truth it is; he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Christ. Our security rests on a far deeper foundation, than our good resolutions and purposes, and our perseverance, though "he that endureth to the end, shall be saved," but the real security is, "*the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

"*And called.*" This refers, I conceive, not to the outward call by the ministry of the word, which comes to all, but to that inward call of the Holy Ghost, which effectually works in them that believe. Thus, in this verse we have a beautiful summary of the Christian character, as "sanctified," in being set apart by God the Father as a gift to his Son; the security of that character, "preserved" in Christ Jesus; and the origin of that character, "called" by the Holy Ghost.

2. *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

"*Mercy.*" The usual salutation is "grace and peace," but here grace is represented by two of its heavenly streams "*mercy and love.*" First mercy—because every other good is dependent on mercy—the first desire of the publican is "God be *merciful* to me a sinner." David prays, "Have mercy upon me, O God;" this just comes home to the humble and contrite heart; mercy is pity for the miserable, compassion to the guilty. The most devoted servants of the Lord need this mercy. Observe, Jude is writing to the sanctified, to the preserved, to the called, yet he says "*mercy unto you,*"

After mercy, we have one of the beautiful flowers of mercy or grace, "*peace,*"—every kind of peace—the peace of God—peace with God, peace in our own consciences—

peace with our fellow-men. Oh! what a blessed thing is true rest and composure of mind in the consciousness of the love of God. But not only mercy and peace—there is the yet higher blessing of *love*, the consummation of holiness and happiness. You see the ladder is, as it were, let down to our lowest necessities—it begins with mercy—rises to peace, and mounts upward till it leaves us in the very character of God, who is love; and yet further, St. Jude prays that all these blessings may be multiplied; that each measure we obtain may be increased and enlarged, and superabound. The more grace we have, the more we may hope for and covet. There is no end of the divine bounty.

3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

"*The common salvation.*" Observe the distinction between writing of the common salvation and contending earnestly for the faith, and see that sometimes this earnest contention is a prior duty even to setting forth the common salvation: Quiet Christians often say to us, "Cannot you leave controversy alone? why must you always be in conflicts?" But Christians are "set for the defence of the Gospel," and they ought not to see, and cannot see, errors and heresy springing up and spreading and defiling men's souls, without raising their voice against them.

"*Beloved, when I gave all diligence.*" Love is always active and diligent, it thinks nothing a trouble. See a mother with her babe, what labour and trouble she bestows upon it, and thinks nothing too much to do for it.

"*To write unto you of the common salvation.*" Notice that expression, "common salvation;" common as the air we breathe, the sun that shines and the water that refreshes; common, as it reveals to us one Father of all,

one Redeemer for all, one Sanctifier, one way, one bread, one common enemy ; and calls us all to be heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, of one everlasting kingdom. Oh ! what folly and guilt to reject a salvation so great, so common, so free !

"*It was needful for me to write unto you.*" Observe how the Spirit distributes to every man severally as he will, and appoints to every man, just that work, which in his wisdom He sees will be best for the whole Church. We have each our needful part and share in the work of Christ, for the good of our fellow-Christians. Oh ! may we never shrink from needful duties.

"*That you should contend earnestly for the faith.*" See what we should contend earnestly for—*the faith ;* not outward ceremonies and forms, but the great doctrines of the gospel, salvation by grace, through faith, unto holiness.

"*Once delivered unto the saints.*" This supersedes and sets aside the papal doctrine of tradition as a necessary addition to the word of God ; the word of God is altogether complete ; it was *once* delivered and requires no human addition. Then observe, laymen are to contend earnestly for the purity of the faith. St. Jude is writing here to the lay-members of the Church. O that laymen every where felt more that they also had a great work as the most important part of the Church, in the maintenance of the gospel.

4. *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation ; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The opposition here spoken of, is predicted throughout Scripture, but especially in the epistles to the Thessalonians and to Timothy : and here is an answer to an objection raised by many, against the application of these passages to Popery, viz. that the rise of such an apostasy, as is described in prophecy, must have had a commencing

era, but we see here—they "crept in unawares"—like the serpent lurking in the brushwood, ere it destroys its victim.

"*Ungodly men.*"—They may profess great reverence for God—they may say, He is too great to interest Himself in what concerns such an insignificant creature as *man*. Oh! how little they know our great and good God! He has told us, He numbers the hairs of our heads, and therefore it is the greatest irreverence to Him to deny his constant Providence in all things, and to shut Him, as it were, out of his own world. To what a dreadful extent men live as without God in the world. O may it be our desire, like Enoch, to walk with God more and more, day by day!

"*Which were before of old ordained to this condemnation.*" They crept in unawares to the Church, but they were not unawares to God. He had foreseen, He had marked them out from the beginning. They have again and again been foretold, described and predicted in his word.

"*Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciciousness.*" First observe, the grace of our God is fully and freely set before us in the gospel. In the pure word of God it is revealed in its fulness and glory; we have also the sacraments as signs and means of grace; we have also recorded in the Bible, the first establishment of the Christian Church, founded only on Christ Jesus, in all its simplicity and purity. Now the grand aim of Popery is to *turn* (mark the word, to twist, to pervert,) this grace of God into lasciviousness, under the mask of deep and reverential religion, bringing in pride, and tyranny, and oppression, and the allowance of every carnal and earthly lust.

"*And denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" Not outwardly or there would be no mystery in the iniquity, no deceivableness in the unrighteousness, 'Popery deny the Father! oh, no, she has such reverence for the greatness of the Father, she thinks Him too great to be approached without human mediators. Popery deny

the Son ! why she has crucifixes in every corner.' Yet how truly, how practically are both the Father and the Son denied by this great apostacy—the commands of the Father trampled on and broken, the second commandment generally left out altogether—the tenderness and grace and sympathy of the Son denied, transferred to the Virgin Mary, and Christ represented as a solemn Judge only. God preserve us all from these snares of the enemy to destroy our souls. What Socinianism does explicitly, Popery does covertly. Both set aside Christ.

5. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*

"*I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this.*" Observe here how much of our Christian progress depends on keeping in memory what we are taught. "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." 1 Cor. xv. 2. It is the constant recollection of God's truth, that gives us its sanctifying and saving power. Oh read the Bible then daily. All the knowledge God gives us is a great talent and trust and responsibility ; we are so apt in our carelessness, to let it all slip from our memory.

"*How that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*" Here we have an early instance, of this turning the grace of God into lasciviousness ; a people rescued from hard bondage and oppression, brought out by the mighty hand of God—yet disbelieving His promises, "thinking scorn of that pleasant land, for they gave no credence unto His word." How fearful the ingratitude and guilt ! How strikingly does the lesson apply to the Gentile churches—brought by God out of darkness and idolatry, baptized into the privileges of the Christian Church, the name of the Lord named

upon them ; and what have they turned to—the Eastern Churches, after being torn with division and strife, are overrun with Mahomedanism,—the Western churches with Popery ; the Protestant churches, not warned by the judgments on the Eastern churches, nor on Popery at the French Revolution, falling into infidelity on the one hand, or relapsing into Popery on the other : and what is the reason?—they believed not—it does not say they attended not to forms—the living power was wanting ;—they *believed not*. Practical unbelief in the grace of God, is the root of innumerable evils. Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompence of reward.

6. *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

Here we have a deep and mysterious subject opened out and coming before us as teaching a practical and instructive lesson, that privileges and advantages ought not to make us secure and presumptuous.

"*And the angels which kept not their first estate.*" The angels are often brought before us in the Holy Scriptures, as a class of God's creatures far superior to man, dwelling in the highest heaven, beholding the face of God : His servants and messengers ; beings so high and glorious that our Lord himself often appeared as an angel. These angels kept not their first estate ; what was their peculiar temptation we know not ; there seems to have been one great leader among them, for we read of the devil and his angels. It would appear that the particular sin which was the occasion of their fall was pride ; as pride is called, falling into the condemnation of the devil. 1 Tim. iii. 6. "Not a novice; lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It was like the first temptation Satan presented to man, "Ye shall be as gods :" so aiming at something God had not created them for, they fell from their first estate.

"*But left their own habitation.*" Satan was cast out of heaven into the region of the air, having left his first abode, and he was no longer privileged to return to it as his home. There are, however, depths of meaning in this, which we cannot understand, until we reach the heavenly glory.

"*Reserved in chains.*" We may see here, that the chains here spoken of, are *spiritual* chains ; the evil angels being all spiritual beings—there is a deep truth contained in this—that whenever we admit a sin into our hearts, we are admitting, as it were, a chain round the spirit, and making, as it were, a dungeon for the soul to dwell in. The devil's chains cannot be broken, he has no Redeemer. But God, who sees us tied and bound with the chain of our sins, does, of his great mercy, loose us. The chains which bind Satan are everlasting chains, pride, ambition, love of dominion, hatred of God, and hatred of God's creatures ; hatred of everything good, and this too *in darkness* —that high intellect, and once glorious spirit, is now in such darkness as to put evil for good, and good for evil, and to think that enmity towards God is his proper position ; what a view we have here of the dreadful effects of sin !

"*Reserved unto the judgment of the great day.*" They are not yet so punished and tormented, as they will be. Matt. xxv. 41. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." They have this horrible feeling, that there is certainly a time of torment coming for them, the judgment of the great day, when Satan will be cast for ever, into the lake of fire and brimstone. We have a full description of the judgment of Satan at the close of the Millennium, in Rev. xx. Oh what madness to yield to the temptations of one thus himself doomed to destruction !

7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

Another example of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, we have in Sodom and Gomorrha; the cities about them, we learn from Deut. xxix. 23, were Admah and Zeboim. All these cities were peculiarly favoured of God, with most beautiful and fertile soil, full of natural beauty and excellence, therefore they were especially bound to love and serve that God who had thus blessed them; but they forgot Him: and we see in Ezekiel xvi. 49, what was their special temptation! "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." Now these lessons come home to *us*, *we* are enriched with ten thousand comforts, all around us. It may teach us that the same sins, would be in the last days, the temptation of the Christian Church, that drew down God's judgments on Sodom; for we see that the name by which Babylon is called in the New Testament, is Sodom. God help us all, then, to special and constant watchfulness and prayer, that we fall not into temptation.

8. *Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*

"*Likewise also these filthy dreamers.*"—We now proceed to the account of a farther degree of wickedness. We find the same progress of evil spoken of in that description of the latter and last days, in 1 Tim. iv., which refers especially to Popery, and afterwards in 2 Tim. iii. and in 2 Peter ii. 1—10.

"*Filthy dreamers.*" They fall asleep in sin, and then, dreaming, they believe their own lie; this is the very cha-

racter and consequence of all delusion on men's minds, whether they be Socialists, Chartists, Papists, or men living under any other of these awful delusions. They dream while they think they only are awake. And their dreams in the sight of God are all filthy.

And then "*defiling the flesh.*" All fleshly lusts they pursue; the list of these we have in Gal. v. 19—21.—uncleanness marks every false religion—the secret abominations of Popery are intolerable. In the College of Maynooth, the Class Books of instruction are so impure and flagrant, that they are obliged to be concealed under the veil of the Latin language. They would not be tolerated in plain English.

"*Despise dominion.*" Now here is a great temptation of these days—the temptation of lawlessness, and casting off authorities under which God has placed us. Many, I fear, in these days, come under the charge of *despising dominion.* There is far too much want of reverencing authority. True it is, we must obey God, rather than man, but still there is a vast field open for obeying God in honouring authority. But after all, the arch-rebel is the Pope, who in past days, set his feet on the necks of kings, despising thus the authorities God has ordained—and we have only to look abroad on what is now passing on every side, to see this character in the present age—a true Christian will therefore be very careful in reproving what is wrong, not to speak evil of dignities—ever remembering the admonition of our Lord—"Behold, I come as a thief, —blessed is he that watcheth," &c.

9. *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*

"*Yet Michael the archangel,*" *&c.* We have here opened out again the wonders of the heavenly world, and the con-

flicts going on there, respecting events happening here below. Michael is often brought before us in Scripture, as the chief of the angels, for there is order and authority among the angels as well as on the earth. We have another mention of Michael, Dan. x. 13. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo! Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." As taking a special interest in the salvation of the Jews, he is the angel watching over the people of God; and in the 12th chapter of Revelations, we read of Michael as the presiding angel in the history of the overthrow of Paganism. See then what is here opened out to us, that there is not merely a conflict going on between men and men, but a far deeper and higher and more mysterious conflict connected with it, going on in the heavenly places, and all our struggles with sin and with Satan, are a matter of intense interest to angels. The particular object of this conflict between Michael and Satan is revealed; it was about the body of Moses. One would not have supposed, that such mighty conflicts had been the result of the Lord's hiding the body, from the short account in Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." I suppose the devil, having in forecast, his master-scheme of Popery, wanted the body of Moses to make a famous relic of it—he would have had a splendid ceremony in his burial, and then the bones taken up for relics. But whatever might be his devices, Michael was watchful against them; and we have the very words Michael spoke. I suppose the devil, full of rage, was beginning to speak evil of God and His truth—and Michael, the prince of the angels, and all his wisdom, knowledge, and holiness, *durst not bring against the devil himself a railing accusation.* Oh how beautiful is the meekness and loving spirit of angels! No doubt, by the fall of Satan from heaven, they have ever been pre-

served from pride. How one may long then to know them, and associate with them.

Michael durst not bring a railing accusation, but he said, "*The Lord rebuke thee.*" Observe, the angels in heaven pray as well as praise—we shall not lose the privilege of prayer, when we get to heaven. True it is, prayer will, in a great measure, be lost in praise ; but in dealing with those over whom we shall reign as kings and priests, there will be plenty of scope for prayer. Michael simply refers the whole matter to the judgment of God ; and here too we learn a great lesson :—when we see what is wrong in others, after having fulfilled our duty in testifying against evil, we must look up to the Lord. Effectually in this case, Michael's prayer was answered in the body of Moses being hid by God, and we hear not of it again, till he appeared in glory with Elijah, on the Mount of transfiguration.

10. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not : but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.*

"*These speak evil of things which they know not.*" They know not spiritual things, therefore they blaspheme them —for instance, the Chartists call restraint of evil, and righteous government, tyranny ; the Papists call real religion, heresy ; and in their ignorance, they put evil for good, and darkness for light ; they know not the joy and peace of believing, they know not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Ghost ; in spiritual things they are altogether blind, and can see nothing.

"*Those things which they know naturally, as brute beasts, therein they corrupt themselves.*"—There is a great deal of natural knowledge, wisdom, science, which worldly men may possess, and often do possess in great superiority to the children of God. To all men, heavenly things are really

revealed in natural things, so that they are without excuse in their neglect of God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even the eternal power and Godhead." Rom. i. 20. But they corrupt themselves in these things which they know naturally; that corruption in its grossest form we see in gluttony, drunkenness, licentiousness, and all kind of filthiness of the flesh. But there is another not less dangerous corruption of things known naturally—when an immortal spirit confines himself to, and idolizes mere intellectual pursuits and pleasures, or when poetry, painting, or music, are suffered entirely to occupy, and wholly to fill his soul, thus shutting God out of His own world, in order to fill his intellect with idols of the mind. Satan's sins are sins of intellect. How low and base then, even as the brutes, are those who stoop down to the more gross and sensual lusts which degrade and destroy men's souls!

Then observe, "*they corrupt themselves.*" It does not say, 'the devil is so wise and ingenious and clever, they cannot help it;' the fault rests with them; they love darkness rather than light. God has exposed the wiles of the devil; has guarded them against his devices; but there is a traitor within, that concurs with the devil's snares, instead of resisting him. See then how much we require sanctified knowledge, in those things which we know naturally. Every kind of attainment may be sanctified by the Spirit of God, as Cowper, for instance, sanctified poetry, as Handel sanctified music; and thus may be made an honour to religion, and a blessing to others; but the middle ground on which the world and the Church meet, is one of special danger, and we should resolve with Harmer, when he wrote his Observations on Scripture, gathered from travels in the East, to make all our worldly studies pay tribute to religion.

11. *Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.*

"*Woe unto them!*" Observe how remarkably the sins of the last days concentrate all the errors and sins of preceding times, and so bring down the accumulated judgment of God;—woe unto them! When the Lord returns from heaven, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the last woe-trumpet, and brings final judgment on the wicked, what a fearful woe it must be! Everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth, the worm that never dies, the fire that never can be quenched. Observe the distinctive features of these corruptions, "they have gone in the way of Cain." Gen. iv. 3—8. What was the great fault in Cain's worship, and why was Abel's more acceptable to God? Abel offered in sacrifice an innocent lamb; the Lord had doubtless appointed the sacrifice of animals, but Cain rejecting the appointment of God, brought the fruit of his own labours—the produce of the earth which he had tilled. This is a specimen of man's expecting to be saved by his own doings, instead of by the sufferings of Christ. This is a picture of present corruptions in the church.

"*And have ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward.*" Balaam, that false prophet, compelled to utter God's truth, and yet who kept as much of this world's good and favour as he durst, and seduced the people of God into evil ways; (Numbers xxii. 7, 22) "through covetousness with feigned words, making merchandize of them"—this is completely the character of Popery. By its masses and penances it makes merchandize of souls; its splendid cathedrals, its rich endowments, the gorgeous dresses of the Pope, all are the price of blood; and so is that covetous worldliness we see among nominal Protestants.

"*And have perished in the gainsaying of Core.*" All the

past history of the Old Testament is a striking type of things to come; the gainsaying of Core seems to refer to corrupt authorities in the priesthood; this is destroyed by fire. The rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, on the other hand, prefigures lawlessness in the people, and is destroyed by the earthquake of the seventh vial. May the Lord send these warnings home to our hearts; and preserve us from the many temptations to which we are exposed.

12. *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.*

"*These are spots in your feasts of charity.*" These corruptions are in the Christian Church, and in the midst of Christendom. What a picture this is of the tendency of a fallen nature, to abuse the best things! Christians had their feasts of charity. There may be a double allusion here, first to the Lord's Supper, and then to religious feasts in which they met together as Christian brethren. The primitive Christians seem to have practically attended to that direction of Christ, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor and maimed, and the halt and the blind." This is a direction of which now the Church has much lost sight, partly owing to the abuses which crept in at these love-feasts: these abuses are alluded to, 1 Cor. xi. 21. "For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Many good things are discontinued through their abuse. when we ought to correct the abuse, and hold fast that which is good.

"*These are spots.*" There are two kinds of spots—spots that *may*, and spots that *cannot be*, consistent with grace. So we read, "their spot is not the spot of His children." Every Christian has his defects, and all our inconsistencies dishonour the gospel, and bring trouble on our own souls;

but those who are here described as spots in the feast of charity, seem altogether corrupt and defiled, and a disgrace to the gospel.

"*Feeding themselves without fear.*" If we refer this to the gospel-feast, to free pardon, to justification by faith alone, to peace with God; there is great danger of feeding without fear, turning the grace of God into licentiousness: or, if taking it as referring to earthly food, we see the warning of Deut. viii. When we have eaten and are full, blessed with all temporal prosperity, *then* our heart may "be lifted up and forget the Lord our God." There is a right and necessary *fear*, to every Christian: we are yet in the battle, yet in the race, the victory is yet to be gained, let us then remember, enemies are round us, and be watchful, prayerful, and dependent on the Lord.

"*Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.*" The Apostle seems to ransack creation to illustrate the vain shows of good which utterly disappoint the heart of man. In the east, where clouds *with* water, are so great a refreshment to the whole land, can be best understood, the emptiness and worthlessness of mere floating clouds, having an appearance of good, but never descending in rain; a fictitious show of religion. God preserve us from it. There is plenty of the vain appearance of good in Popery, and in Protestantism too.

"*Trees whose fruit withereth; without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.*" What a progress in evil and misery! At first there was a show of fruit, but this fruit, instead of being brought to perfection, withereth; leaves them without fruit, twice dead; first, dead in trespasses and sins, and second, dead by apostacy; then plucked up by the roots. Thus it is utterly impossible that such trees should bear fruit any more. God Almighty preserve you all, my dear family, from such awful apostacy.

13. *Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*

"*Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame.*" Turbulent and unquiet, all their revilings and vile language disgrace themselves; "speaking great swelling words," full of boasting, vain-glory, and self-conceit.

"*Wandering stars.*" There is an appearance of a real star, but it is only a falling meteor going out in darkness. This is a striking picture of that false profession of religion, which promises so much, but is so vain and self-destructive to the soul; and what an awful issue has all this dreadful inconsistency for them, the blackness and darkness is reserved for ever—gloomy despair their dreadful portion for ever.

14. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.*

"*And Enoch also.*" This is the only account we have of this prophecy in Scripture. Enoch lived at an early age of the Church of Christ, and his translation seems to have taken place at the end of the first thousand years after the creation; and yet in this closing book of Scripture, his prophecy is recorded, of which no other mention had previously been made. How much there is, how vast are the stores of hidden truth, which we have yet to learn. Of Enoch, the account in Genesis is exceedingly short. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we have a little further account, it shews that Enoch's *faith* was the real root of his holy character. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In Jude, we see the grand object he had in view, the coming of the Lord.

"*The seventh from Adam.*" Perhaps one reason of this being specified, is from the number *seven* being the emblem of perfection. It may also possibly intimate that the seventh millennary will be the beginning of judgment, as in the case of the Deluge. One grand help to faith and walking with God, is the fixing on the mind the coming of the Lord to judgment.

He "*prophesied of these.*" There were then wicked men on the earth, who were going to be destroyed; but they were types of a still farther development of evil in the last days, and Enoch in his prophesying included the wickedness of men in the last days. It will probably be more atrocious than any previous.

"*Behold, the Lord cometh.*" What! after the world had been created only 1000 years, was Enoch able to look through the long vista of 5000 years, and yet say, "the Lord *cometh?*" Observe here, if Enoch was helped in walking with God 5000 years back, by looking forward to the Lord's return to judgment, how much more should our faith be quickened by it in these latter days.

"*Behold.*" Look at it, said Enoch, keep it steadily in view, let the final consummation of all things be ever before your mind.

"*He cometh.*" Every step has been as it were an advance and step onward, a preparation for those last days; the deluge—the patriarchal and Jewish dispensation—the first coming of Christ—the Christian dispensation—the reign of Popery—the Reformation, every thing has been as a preparing of the way beforehand, that our Lord Jesus might have His beautiful kingdom at length full of blessedness and of glory.

"*Ten thousand of his saints,*"—or *myriads upon myriads;* which shows that the saints are raised before the Lord returns to judgment; this is very often predicted in God's word. "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I saw in the

night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Dan. vii. 10. 13, 14. 22. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Zech. xiv. 5. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." 1 Thess. iv. 15. First, the Lord comes with the voice of the archangel, then the dead saints are raised—the living saints with them meet the Lord in the air, then the angels join the glorious company: and thus there is assembled together the Church of the first-born. This is the great event, which Enoch contemplated with such a steady gaze, and which he prophesied, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, 5000 years ago. It is here inserted by Jude in the word of God, that it might never be lost.

15. *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

"*To execute judgment upon all that are ungodly among them.*" We have here the warning of the Holy Ghost, as to the best safeguard against the temptations of these latter days. In this judgment upon the wicked, the Lord is accompanied by his saints, who share in the work of judgment. Immediately upon meeting the Lord in the air, they have their portion in glory assigned to them, according to their works here below. They then return with the

Lord to our earth, to execute judgment on the ungodly, see Rev. xix, 14, "And the armies which were in heaven, followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." That judgment is awfully described in various parts of God's word ; it is a complete overthrow of the wicked, who shall be consumed by fire from heaven. I suppose the executing judgment upon all, includes the whole season of judgment ; that is, both before the millennium, and the final judgment after the last rebellion. Enoch saw that nothing but this last judgment would effectually *convince* the ungodly. They have had many other warnings, the deluge—the destruction of Sodom, and, what ought most of all to convince them of the evil of sin —God gave His own Son to die on the tree, (so Paul tells us, Heb. x. 26.) "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." But this failing to convince them, the last fire shall at length show to millions of our fellow-men, now walking in unbelief, worldliness, and sin, with what rashness they have rebelled with high hand against God.

16. *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts ; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*

"*These are murmurers.*" We see here a remarkable conjunction between the sinners before the deluge, and those before the last fire ; so Christ says, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." Luke xvii. 26, 27. Here then we have the character of the world before the last fire. There is no gradual progress to a spiritual millennium—there is no universal reign of righteousness. Worldliness is the dominant feature. It is true

that there is a great increase of the church of Christ—it has been growing from the beginning. But there is with this, a growing corruption of Christianity, and a growing intenseness of wickedness.

"*These are murmurers.*"—Murmurers against God, and against the ministers of God; murmurers against all above them, and all around them, dissatisfied with all but themselves. They are walking after the lusts of their own hearts: some follow the lust of ambition—some of money—some of worldly honour, or of pleasure; self-gratification is the ruling principle of the world.

"*Their mouth speaketh great swelling words.*"—You may see the beginning of this in the public orators of the present day, who lead the public mind, and also in men of science, "*having men's persons in admiration because of advantage,*"—not giving glory to God, by seeking his power and honour, but losing sight of God as the real Author of every improvement and advance. Men are honoured and not God—millions of men now have men's persons in admiration, and tens of millions trust more in man than they do in the living God. The real *guard* of the Church is in the word of prophecy.

17. *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

"*But, beloved.*" The frequency with which this title occurs should not lessen our sense of its blessedness—beloved of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; beloved of angels, beloved of their fellow-Christians, one delightful heavenly atmosphere of love, embracing the whole family of God.

"*Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Christ met every temptation, by remembering, and bringing out, the word of God. God has laid up an armour of defence for us to meet all our necessities, in His own word, and especially

in the Apostolic writings: Oh, I entreat you, my family, each to furnish yourselves well with this best armour, this most valuable of all treasures. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Meditate in it day and night.

18. *How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.*

"*How they told you there should be mockers in the last time.*" St. Jude in alluding to the writings of the other Apostles, shows that his own epistle was among the later ones; he seems here to refer to 2 Peter iii. 3. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Scoffing at religion being the last consummation of wickedness. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Psalm i. 1. Observe, the last time as distinguished from the latter times; we see the two clearly distinguished in the first and second epistles of Timothy; the last times seem chiefly remarkable for a fuller development of Antichrist, and then for the full revelation of the salvation of Christ Jesus, see 1 Peter i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

"*They told you.*" The special allusion here seems to be to 2 Peter iii. 3. We want repeated warnings of the great dangers of these days. *Mockers*—a consummation of wickedness. We see a vast deal of this on every side, especially among Infidels and Socialists, and also among worldly men. They walk after their own ungodly lusts. How dreadfully true this description is! The Lord enable us to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to follow Christ only.

19 *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

"*Separate themselves.*" By multiplied groundless divisions—this seems to bear strongly against separation from true Christians of every name who hold the great truths of the Gospel, even though there may be many lesser differences. We ought to realize the practical direction.—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Rom. xiv. 1. Giving themselves up to a sensual religion—this is very much the character of Popery, it is a religion of the senses.—Everything is contrived to gratify the imagination and delight the eye, the ear, and the senses: and then the reason of all is given thus, "*having not the Spirit.*" "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Oh, how much we all need the Holy Ghost. Let us pray earnestly for that blessed gift.

20. *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.*

We now pass out of the dark region of the transgressors of the last days, and come to the little flock of Christ, and their duties to themselves and to the wicked around them,—"When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." We see here that while the ungodly are raging on every side, the Church of God is preparing to be presented "blameless" before His presence. The Apostle does not say, "be not carried away with their delusions," but he puts before them the high and holy duties in which they are to be advancing in the midst of all the wickedness of the ungodly. Observe here, faith is the foundation-grace, the beginning of all those excellent gifts, to which the Christian is to be daily

adding; as we see in 2 Peter i. 5. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge." It is not to be left alone, but in building on it, it is daily to be enlarged and manifested. That faith which rests on Jesus as the sure foundation and the chief corner-stone, the Rock of ages, is *most holy* in contrast with the ungodly lusts of sinners; faith is of all the graces the most sanctifying; working by love. The strength for this is "*praying in the Holy Ghost,*" this is the main-spring of our constant growth. All our power is out of ourselves, and in the might of the Holy Ghost. Therefore prayer is the great secret of the Christian life; —"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." It is easy to repeat forms of prayer, or by the intellect to pray extempore; but there is no real prayer from the heart of fallen man, but what the Holy Ghost inspires; and that Holy Spirit is really given to them that ask. In the midst of formalism on the one side, and lawlessness on the other, real Christians are to be abounding in spiritual worship, and so to be strengthened against all their temptations. What an important direction this is in these evil days. To what a blessed state it raises us poor sinners each hour, even to be lifted up by the power of the Holy Ghost to a blessed communion with our Heavenly Father. God give it to us more and more.

21. *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

"*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*" This is the richest and sweetest direction of the Holy Scriptures, continually to be realizing God's love; it is a difficult lesson, sometimes, to spell out God's love in our trials—but as the child begins with the alphabet, and then passes on to syllables and longer words, till by degrees, all reading becomes easy to it, so in trying to learn God's love in every thing

will it open out clearly and beautifully, till by degrees we see the most wonderful love in our hardest trials; real, full, persevering, constant, unfathomable, unsearchable love in all His dealings with us, whether in the shining sun of prosperity, or in the dark cloud of adversity. Oh, may you and I be kept in this love.

"*Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*" What a striking close of these directions as to personal religion! After exhorting Christians to build up themselves in their most holy faith, and keep themselves in the love of God, he gives the same lesson as our blessed Lord, who said, "when ye have done all these things, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which it was our duty to do." So here, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—what a perfect contrast to the self-righteous spirit of worldly men! The Holy Spirit knows what is in man; he knows that the very best of us are full of corruption and infirmities, continually falling short of the glory of God, and however we may appear excellent to others, we are in the sight of God full of short-comings and sins; therefore He gives this sweet closing direction, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian is to look for mercy amid all the afflictions he has endured, and amid all the sufferings through which he has passed for Christ's sake; his trials prepare him for his glory; those sovereigns who have been the greatest blessings to our country went through great trials to their crown. Our blessed Redeemer Himself learnt obedience by the things which he suffered; His sufferings prepared the way for His being a Priest on His throne; and I believe one great reason of the sufferings of Christians, is to prepare them to be monarchs—the royal priesthood who shall hereafter reign over the earth, to reign in grace, long-suffering, and goodness over their fellow-men.

This then should be our present position, "*looking for the mercy, &c.*" And observe it is not merely mercy in general, many are looking in that way for mercy—but this is, "*the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" That mercy

which He purchased, and which He bestows,—that mercy which is peculiar to Him who left His Father's throne to become a man of sorrows, to come into a world of sin and of sinners: that is the mercy we want, and which suits our necessities. And then, yet further, this mercy is unto eternal life. Here is the unspeakable consolation, that when we are depending on Jesus, it is an everlasting salvation with which we are saved. What a salvation is that when he says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," when the gates of the heavenly mansion are opened to His children, when the promise is fulfilled, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me on my throne," and the "righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." We are to be looking for these things—they are not beyond our expectations; we are not to say, This *looking* may be very well for some great saints and eminent servants of Christ—no, it is for all the children of God;—there is not one of us but should be expecting and looking out for this;—"looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." How experimentally, how practically, how beautifully, is the doctrine of the blessed Trinity here set forth in this passage of Jude!

22. *And of some have compassion, making a difference.*

We now come to the directions as to the course Christians are to pursue towards others who are erring. With regard to our fellow-Christians, there is to be union, sympathy and love; with regard to those who are erring, we are to discern things that differ and to exercise wise discrimination. There is a great deal of that wisdom which is profitable to direct, needed for this discrimination. It is a blessed talent which God gives to some in greater measure than to others. "*Have compassion*"—do not look with indifference on the sins of your fellow-men. Abraham prayed for

Sodom; our blessed Saviour wept over Jerusalem—have compassion then on some: they sin perhaps from ignorance, or from inexperience, or from youth; they have had peculiar temptations, they may not have had the advantages which we enjoy: Speak to them therefore with pity and kindness, and tenderness; they are as sheep without a shepherd; try to win them back to the fold with all the drawings of loving-kindness.

23. *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire: hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

"*And others save with fear.*" In direct contrast to the spirit of the world, which would oppress and deal hardly with the gentle and the weak, and yield before bold and impudent sin. Save them with fear—not with fear of them or their displeasure, but with fear of their ruin, and being speedily overtaken with the wrath of the Most High. Oh, had we right views of the real danger of sinners, how earnest should we be with them. May God open our eyes that we may fulfil this duty

"*Hating even the garment spotted with the flesh.*" Taking heed lest in helping them, you yourself become contaminated, for sin is like a deadly plague, infecting even the garments, and so spreading death by every thing connected with it. This applies to much that we now see in the world, and all its vain pomps and pleasures; theatres for instance;—what centres of vice they are in London! However unexceptionable a play may be in itself, there are few, it is to be feared, that are not full of what the Bible condemns, the garments round it are spotted with the flesh: and so it is with all the lusts of the eye and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. God keep us from them.

24. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

"*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.*" The ascription of glory seems directed to the Trinity : the great object, and the whole aim of a Christian, the very end for which he is formed, being to enjoy God and glorify Him for ever. First, notice the description of that Being whom we are to glorify. He is able to keep us from falling ; the Christian has confidence in this ability, and reposes on it ; look at the grounds of this confidence,—there is ground for it in the works of creation. What wonders in the heavens over our head, and the earth under our feet ; what infinite variety and perfection ; He who made all, must be able to keep us. So in redemption, He who redeemed all, when lost and undone, at the costly price of the blood of his Son, must be able to keep us : so if we look at the different Persons of the Trinity,—God the Father in his infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love, Oh how able he is to keep. God the Son, who has all power in heaven and earth, has declared, " My sheep shall not perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" —all-sufficient is He to keep. It is the daily work of the blessed Spirit, who abides with us for ever, omnipotent to help us in all our infirmities, to sustain us and to keep us from falling. To preserve an immortal soul from falling, is like preserving a spark alive in the ocean,—is like preserving sheep among wolves. What a precious truth then it is, that God is able to hold up our goings in His paths to the end ; He has in Christ made a covenant of grace with us, that having begun a good work in our hearts, He will carry it on to the end, that He will put His fear into our hearts so that we shall not depart from Him. Jesus, who knows what agony and remorse falls occasion to His children, engages, if they lean on Him, *to keep them from fall-*

ing. May we then cleave unto the Lord, and put our whole trust in Him.

"*And to present you faultless.*" Having stated the ability of Christ *to keep us from falling*, the Apostle next leads us to consider his ability to "present us faultless before the presence of his glory." How important a subject is this! All our daily toils and labours, and sorrows and anxieties, should have this as their just issue; for this we warn, for this we teach, for this we labour and are occupied, if we are *rightly* warning, and teaching, and labouring, and being occupied. God our Saviour does this for us; the triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is concerned in our being thus presented faultless. The Father proposed it from eternity, the Son accomplished the purchase of it, and daily now lives as Mediator to effect it, and the Holy Ghost works in us, day by day, to prepare us for it.

"*To present you.*"—In a certain sense a presentation is made by ministers of the fruit of their labours, as St. Paul says, Col. i. 28. "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" but here it refers to that great presentation of his people, made by Christ in the glorious presence of His Father, when he says, "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me." What then is the presence of this glory? We seem to have some type of it, 1 Kings viii. 10, 11. "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." That which the priests could not bear under the Mosaic dispensation, the royal priesthood will be able to endure under the eternal dispensation, for we shall see him face to face, and know as we are known. What an exceeding and eternal weight of glory is thus working out for the people of God! To this, God, our Saviour, is able to bring us, and mighty steps towards it He has already taken; He has given us the light of his word to guide our steps aright—He has given us the fountain of his blood to cleanse away every spot and

stain of sin, and He has given us the earnest of the Spirit to prepare us for this glory. Nor can we doubt, that when each member of the spiritual church is removed to the invisible world, where he is with Christ, infinitely happier than when on earth; a preparation is going on for the great day of presentation; men shall be weaned from every thing carnal and earthly, and made wholly like Jesus for this glorious presentation. The great tribulation is to purify and prepare the church for glory; and the certain result of it will be, that every child of God shall be found faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Oh! what a blessed hope is that, of being faultless after all our self-condemnation, and fears, and accusations from the world, faultless for ever!

"*With exceeding joy.*"—The rejoicing at the Lord's presenting his bride, the Church, before the presence of the Divine glory, is the sublime, heavenly subject brought before us in these words. First, observe the joy of Christ. He presents the church to the Father with exceeding joy; it is the result of His counsels with the Father and the Holy Ghost before the world began; it is the result of four thousand years of preparation before His first coming; the result of all His humiliation and agony; the result of His patient waiting for two thousand years, bearing with the iniquities of men, and the infirmities of his people. It is the concentrated joy of soul after soul gathered together, consummated, and completed in glory; myriads of saints raised in their resurrection-bodies, with purified and immortal spirits, for ever holy, for ever happy, and He himself having accomplished all, at the costly price of his own blood! What joy is this to Christ: he ever had it in his contemplation. For the joy set before him, He endured the cross, despising the shame; and what joy to Christ will be all the glory this day will bring to his Father, all the explanation it will afford of the mysteries hitherto spread over all things. Our blessed Saviour will then rejoice with exceeding joy. But to another class it will be a day of rejoicing. Angels will rejoice: if there is joy among them

over one sinner that repenteth, what will be the accumulated joy, when all those repenting sinners are brought together in resurrection-glory before God! What will be the acclamations of joy among the angels, when they all cry out, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever!" And if the angels have joy in that day, what blessedness is in store for the people of Christ, when they hear the invitation, "Well done! good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." What joy in the complete deliverance from the condemnation of the wicked, from fear, and sorrow, and anxiety, and weariness; what joy in perfect holiness without one spot of sin, in perfect glory without one reproach, in the society of all we love and venerate, and that too for ever and ever, and with Him, who alone has made us all what we are. Well may it be called *exceeding joy*. Oh! my family, let us strive, and fight, and struggle on till we gain it.

25. *To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

"*To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory.*" Here is the result of all the dispensations of God, the issue of all the opposition made to the gospel of His grace. This is the desire of the Church, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory;"—the great object of all the wishes of the Church being here centered in God—He to them being All in all. We may notice two things: first, the description of God; then, the ascription of glory to Him. Every word in the description of God is full of instruction, and has a deep truth in it. God is only-wise, all others that have power, wisdom, glory or dominion, deriving it entirely from Him, Dan. ii. 20, 28. "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh

known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." You have only to look around you for abounding signs of the wisdom of God. See the sun shining over your head, what wisdom! the earth bringing forth fruit in its season, what wisdom! the animal creation, the formation of man, what wisdom! then look at his Providence, sustaining, providing for, controlling all, what wisdom manifested here! Then see human beings alienated from God, using the faculties He has given them in rebellion against Him, and God in the work of redemption and sanctification, overcoming every obstacle, and providing a complete remedy—what depth of wisdom here! well may we then ascribe wisdom only to God: but what a combination is it, when we can see God our Saviour, joining the glory of the Godhead with our free and full salvation. Oh most precious conjunction! God our Saviour! Let us believe it with our whole heart, and rejoice in the blessed truth continually.

"*To God our Saviour then be glory, &c.*"—There seems to be a pouring forth from the overflowing heart of the Christian of one magnificent attribute after another to be given to God; his desire is, "Blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." Far is it from being so now. Now glory is given by some to mere worldly things, by others to human wisdom, talents, and learning; almost all seek their own glory, and the honour that comes from man. It is not so in the true Church of Christ on earth. It will not be so in the Church triumphant in glory. "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day;" and all shall rejoice in giving Him the glory of all his perfections of wisdom and love, truth and justice, righteousness and mercy.

True *majesty* is His only. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords;—he reigns over all, and soon the shouts of all creation shall be heard, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Dominion without limit or end, over all in heaven or earth and under the earth, is His; whatever any created being may have, it is all derived from Him, and dependent on Him, and to be used for Him.

With these glorious perfections, too, is joined a *power* to which nothing is impossible; to which every thing is subjected, and which is always exercised in sustaining, governing, and blessing the whole world, restraining and punishing the wicked, but ever doing good to those who put their trust in Him. Well then may these perfections be the portion and joy of his people now. Well may God finally and for ever be their All in all. Oh, may each of us say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO TIMOTHY.

THE introductions to the epistles are very important, as stamping their Divine origin, and shewing that it is not a poor human being that speaks, but the Lord of glory, through that human instrument, who demands our whole attention, our reverence, faith, and love.

1. "*Paul*," what a word is that one name—his own history, the effects upon the world of his life! What would the world have been, if that one name had been blotted out! *We* should have been in pagan darkness. "*An apostle*," or a messenger, or a missionary, or one sent on an errand, all mean the same thing. But what an errand Paul's was! from the most high God, a message of great joy to all people, nothing less than the good tidings of the Gospel, salvation from hell, and the hope of glory. "*Of Jesus Christ*," Jesus had left his church on earth, but was not careless of its welfare. He sent the Holy Ghost to comfort and guide it, and not only so, He sent divine messages to it by his apostles. "*By the commandment of God our Saviour;*" he here clearly states his divine authority. Oh! sweet conjunction—the great God our Judge, our Governor, but also *our Saviour*, *mighty* to *save*. "*And the Lord Jesus Christ*," how clearly the great truth of our Saviour's divinity is here pointed out. Each word is so expressive, *Jesus Christ* calling to our

mind the pity and love of the Father which gave him, and of our blessed Lord himself in coming, and the evils from which he rescues us.

2. "*Unto Timothy my own child—my son.*" This shews the real relationship, closer even than between child and parent, which subsists between spiritual parents and spiritual children. I would rather choose one spiritual child than all the riches of the wealthiest estate, as a more lasting, and permanent, and glorious honour, possession, and advantage. Let our ambition, and desire be for this, to gain spiritual children, who may be our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. "*In the faith,*" comprehends the hearty reception of the truth. How soon the apostle gets into the mention of faith, hope, and love —hope in verse 1, faith in verse 2, and love in verse 5, the lovely circle in which a Christian moves. "*Grace, mercy, and peace,*" it has been remarked that this threefold prayer only occurs in the epistles to ministers, since they peculiarly have need of mercy, on account of the extreme responsibility of their office, James iii. 1, 2. *Grace* is free favour to the unworthy—*mercy*, pity and compassion to the guilty, miserable, needy, and destitute—*peace*, inward and outward, springing from grace and mercy—"*from God our Father.*" Of what unspeakable moment to a justly-condemned criminal is the favour and mercy of the Judge! much more then is it of unspeakable moment to us to have the grace and mercy of our God. The one prolongs existence for a few short years, at best full of sorrow, the other raises from hell, and exalts to eternal blessedness and glory. By that sweet title "our Father," all riches, power, love, holiness, are ours for evermore; and the channel by which we gain all, "*Jesus Christ our Lord.*" We are so vile and sinful that God, in his infinite holiness, could have no contact at all with us but in the way of wrath and judgment. But now, in Jesus our representative, wearing our form, our flesh, and nature, Satan can discern nothing sinful, and God with his infinite holiness continually delights in Jesu's purity,

that through Him the stream of grace, and peace, and mercy may continually flow upon our sinful souls.

3. We have many allusions to the Ephesian church, all full of interest: the forming of the church, Acts xviii. 19, xix, St. Paul's address to the elders, warning them of the grievous wolves which would come among the flock, Acts xx. 29; and the effects of these false teachings, Revelation ii. 4. In this church, then, Paul besought Timothy to abide. Thus he teaches us what true love is; not merely a seeking of our own enjoyment in the society of the beloved object, but a desire that they should be where they can do the most good, and so gain the fullest reward. Here, you see, though Paul and Timothy loved each other's company, they loved their Saviour still better, and therefore were willing to sacrifice their present enjoyment. "*No other doctrine*" alludes, I suppose, to *Christ our hope*, in the first verse, and to *grace, mercy and peace*; indeed to all the simple doctrine, contained in the grand truth of God's love to sinners and His giving his Son for them. How prone the heart is to wander from the simple doctrines of the gospel! why? not because there is not sufficient comfort, but because they restrain our lusts, they keep us in the depths of self-abasement, they ascribe glory to God alone.

4. In the Eastern churches there was too much of this, Irenæus gives us a great deal of information about it. They raised ingenious and subtle questions, setting aside Christ and exalting human nature, invented by Satan to mystify and destroy the simplicity of the gospel. While we keep close to the line of the word of God, and do not go beyond it, we are safe; and perhaps the danger of this day is more that of not searching enough into the fulness of truth. "*Godly edifying*, &c." Beautiful expressions these! God has in his word given us, as it were, the rules and laws of his family and household; all provision is here made for us, the Spirit is here promised; let our aim be, then, to build up and edify each other in the faith.

5. What a beautiful, comprehensive view of Divine truth!

what delightful inferences we draw from it! how full of love our God must be, when the very sum of his commands is love! as we see in Romans xiii. 8, 9, 10, and Galatians v. 14. Oh! truly we may see our God is love, and would have our happiness to consist in supreme love to Himself, and sincere hearty love to our fellow-men. Well, this is the beautiful copious stream of love or charity: now let us examine the fountain-heads whence it flows. A *pure heart*, freed by the Spirit from the dominion of its lusts and passions—pride, envy, passion, and that false passionate love and fondness which is idolatry, and is mingled with much self-seeking—for instance, in not mentioning sin we see in others, which the Bible shows to be *hatred*, and not *love*. Would we have real love, we must have *a good conscience*. How may we obtain it? First, by the precious blood of Jesus, sprinkled on our conscience, purging us from past sins; secondly, by the enlightening Spirit, instructing and enlightening our consciences according to that beautiful prayer, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, &c.; thirdly, by having no sin troubling our conscience, no unconfessed sin, no unopposed lusts, nothing between God and our souls. There is yet another fountain, "*faith unfeigned*," a firm belief of God's grace and love as revealed in his Son. In James ii. a *feigned* faith is described. May our faith be firm and unhypocritical (as the word in the Greek more exactly expresses it,) taking the Bible as our only standard, resolving to live and die for it.

6. "*Having swerved*" or turned aside from the right aim and end of the law, which is love, they have turned aside into by-ends of inward self-righteousness, outward desire of superiority, self-exaltation, and self-seeking, or desiring to bring us again under the bondage of the whole ceremonial law. Such, have turned aside into "*vain jangling*." The Greek word signifies "a discourse of emptiness." Oh, what a thousand pities that the tongue, which is the glory of men, and given for the service and glory of God, should be converted into a vain, empty, unprofitable member in our mouths.

7. "*Desiring to be teachers*," &c. I suppose the Judaizers are here referred to, who endeavoured to bring the early Christians into bondage, teaching that a man could not be saved without a strict observance of all the ceremonies of the law of Moses. *Understanding neither* &c., here we learn a very important lesson, how strong *affirmation* of what is false, follows on simply *saying* a false thing. Look at Peter in his unhappy fall; first denying, then with oaths and curses; and let us be ever guarded against this snare of our great enemy.

8. How few Christians of the present day can say this from the heart, now that the gospel has been so fearfully abused, that the law is almost entirely thrown overboard. But the law is indeed *good*, not only as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but also as a gracious rule to be received from the hands of Christ as the standard of our daily conduct—good in its political constitution, good in its ceremonies and shadows of Christ, good in its moral character, as the only path of wisdom and happiness, *if a man use it lawfully*. We use it unlawfully when we use it in a self-righteous manner, setting aside Christ as our righteousness and strength; but we use it lawfully when we use it for conviction of sin, for self-examination, to lead to Christ; and pray for grace to keep it, as our rule of life, and path of happiness.

9. "*Knowing this*." A very important part of saving knowledge is connected with a just view of the law and the gospel—not being under bondage to the law on the one hand, not using it self-righteously on the other,—not using the gospel as a cloke of licentiousness on the one hand, but as a quickening and stirring motive to duty—"being not without law to God, but under law to Christ," standing free from its condemnation, receiving it from the hands of Christ, as the Lord's freemen, as our path of happiness and wisdom. Observe the connection between this important *knowledge* and the gospel. "Knowing this," verse 9, "according to the glorious gospel," &c., verse 11. —"*that the law was not made for a righteous man*," or rather

is not in condemnation against a righteous man. Now, in one sense, there is none righteous, no, not one; but, in another sense, all the children of God have a real righteousness.—1st. Through faith in Christ his righteousness is imputed to them. 2ndly. Through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, they have, though in much imperfection, a delight in the law of God, after the inward man, so that a Christian can say, "Oh, how I love thy law," &c., and in glory these imperfect beginnings shall be perfected. But the law was made for those who live in the practice of the awful catalogue of sins which follows, in order to convince them of sin, and lead them to a Saviour. Observe how lawlessness is first mentioned, the lawlessness of Eve being the *first* sin, and the lawlessness of Antichrist the *last* before the coming of Christ. Observe *men-stealers*, first in the awful catalogue; there are two kinds of men-stealing—one of their bodies, as in slavery; the other of their souls, as in Popery. Liars are classed with men-stealers and perjurers:—"*liars* shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." How humbled should we be in the remembrance of any falsehoods we at any time may have told. Profaning the solemnity of an oath is the last sin mentioned. The unfolding of the law is here stamped, as healthy or wholesome instruction.

11. The beginning of this verse confirms both truths—that the law is good, and that it was not made against a righteous man; for what could more glorify the law than God's only-begotten Son coming down from heaven, fulfilling every jot and tittle of that law, and not only so, but also willingly enduring its penalty and curse.—Romans ii. 12—16; iii. 31? There we are shown that it could not be made against a righteous man, for the curse and penalty were fully accomplished in the cross; all its shafts were buried in the body of Jesus; and now, instead of being a terror to the believer, it is the happy rule, received from his Redeemer, by which he is guided to happiness—it is no longer a guard to drag him to judgment, but a friendly guide to conduct and lead him along the path of life. Every

word of our text is beautiful, "the *blessed* God," emphatically the happy one. Yes, our God is *light*, and our God is *love*; supremely happy in himself, and diffusing happiness to all about Him; let us be happy in his happiness, and rejoice in his joy, from it sprung our redemption. "*The glorious gospel*," *glorious*, as it illustrates all the harmony, and perfection, and beauty of God's attributes. "Jesus is the *brightness* of his *glory*," &c." "the light of the knowledge of the *glory* of God shines *in the face of Jesus Christ*;" *glorious* as it changes and conforms us into the same image,—beholding Him in the glass of the gospel. Again, *glorious*, as it brings us to a participation of the same glory—we shall behold and partake of the glory of Christ himself.

A most important truth is brought out for the ministers and people of Christ in the latter clause of our text. A truth much brought out in the epistles, 1 Cor. ix. 17. Gal. ii. 7. Col. i. 25. 1 Thess. ii. 4. Even the smallest measure of knowledge of God, and love to Him, is not given us merely for ourselves; there is *great* love in God's gifts, but not *partial* love; we are made *stewards* of God's mysteries, for the good of others. What a solemn obligation lies upon all in this matter! an obligation by which we are debtors to all who have not the light of God's grace, and for which we must render an account hereafter.

12. How our Saviour must be all in all! We give thanks *to* Christ for what we receive, only *from* Christ. I think in prayer we too much forget direct praise to our Saviour. Oh, what a contrast in Paul's mind! *formerly*, breathing out threatenings and slaughters against all who loved the Lord Jesus: *now*, "I give thanks to Christ Jesus *our Lord*." How plain is the Divine glory of our Redeemer, that he is to be adored, extolled, and magnified! *Who hath enabled me*. Who hath imparted to me Divine power. Nothing else can break the power of sin. The Apostle does not ascribe anything to good inclinations of his own. This Divine power is promised for Christ's sake in answer to prayer: how important then that we should be much

in prayer! *For that he counted me faithful.* First, He imparts power, and then looks for faithfulness. How continually, in the Scripture, Divine strength and man's working are joined together;—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is *God* that worketh in you," &c. Whatever power we may have—*power* of partaking of God's blessed word—*power* of God's promises —*power* of obtaining the Holy Ghost—*power* of time—power of strength, and every other talent; we must be faithful to it. Our condemnation in the day of judgment, as we see in the parable of the talents, is this,—the want of improving our talents. The highest degree of faithfulness is required in the ministry, therefore it is my bounden duty to warn you most plainly of all sin, and lead you to all duty. Ministry might be rendered *service*, in which view we are *every one* in our several stations to serve Christ.

13. How encouraging is this description. We need not despair when we see this formerly virulent persecutor made such a monument of grace. The three sins seem to be selected, of blasphemy *toward God;* persecution of *the Church;* and injury *toward man.* How fresh, even to the end of his course, is the memory of former sin in his mind! So should we contemplate and be humbled under the recollection of sin, both before and after conversion. Two things specially call for praise—the height of mercy to which we are exalted, and the depths of iniquity from which we have been delivered.

The reason for showing mercy, is striking, when compared with that in the 16th verse; and shows that, though our God has full power to have mercy, on whom he will have mercy, yet, in the richest manifestations of his grace, there is an infinite righteousness. The chief priests who had fought against God's richest mercies and grace; and had even invented a fable, to hide from the eyes of others, the convincing fact of the resurrection, *perished.* Paul, who was sent by them, *obtained mercy,* &c.; for though the darkness of his conscience was very sinful, in the midst of the light of Christ's miracles in Judea; yet his sin

was not of that fearful kind, fighting against the faithful light and admonition of conscience. Now, my dear family, what is the lesson we have here? to follow the light of conscience,—"to exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man." "Whatever is not of faith, is sin," &c. Whatever our conscience charges and tells us to do, that we must attend to. Ignorance is the parent of unbelief, just as Divine knowledge is the parent of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing," &c.; mercy and grace are the two great blessings which we are to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain. *Mercy*—what a large word! pity for our sin and misery, relieving us from it freely, pardoning all our guilt. *Grace*—now mark from Eph. iii. 8., what is the highest gift of grace God can bestow, not as the world would say—a dukedom, a kingdom, an empire; but to be made useful to others, to be a means of blessing to those around us.

14. We have here an instance of the holy and blessed revenge grace will take on sin and Satan; so that the very depths into which we fall, are, by superabounding grace, made to call forth the highest notes of thanksgiving. Not that such a view will ever induce a believer to fall into sin; but if through temptation he has fallen, it is an unspeakable consolation to know that sin can never overcome grace—grace must *reign*. "The top-stone shall be brought with shoutings, *grace*, *grace*, unto it." See, for instance, the early spread of the gospel; the opposition of the Jews, was merely a feeble dam which impeded indeed the mighty torrent for a moment; but only that it might have a wider spread, and deluge the Gentile world with blessing. Grace does not leave a man as it found him, to go on in sin, and merely to have the continual reception of pardon for that sin. The grand distinguishing feature of grace is, that it changes the sinner, makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus; it imparts to him a faith which worketh by love. What a noble grace is faith, firmly to stand for God, and to confess him in a world which knows him not! This is *in Christ Jesus*. He is the object of faith in what

he has done, and what he will do—the Sustainer, the Author of faith—the object of love, in his person, and all his offices. Would we gain much faith which worketh by love, we must meditate very much on the *grace* of Christ. May our God give us, in rich abundance, these precious fruits of grace.

15. Several times the expression, *saying*, is prefixed to any truth of peculiar importance, 1 Tim. iii. 1 ; iv. 8, 9. 2 Tim. ii. 11. I suppose that, before the Apostle's creed was compiled, *these* were used as a kind of watchword among Christians, containing the most important and leading doctrines of the Gospel. This saying is *faithful*. This is the grand point, to know that we rest on a Rock, when we rest on this promise ;—that heaven and earth shall pass away, but *it* shall not pass away ; it is also *worthy of all acceptation*, for all classes, for the most eminent saint, like St. Paul, and the most abandoned sinner that ever breathed—for high and low, for rich and poor, learned or unlearned, weak or strong—worthy to govern all our faculties ; spirit, soul, and the whole man should be constrained by the love of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. What then is this faithful saying ? *Jesus Christ came*, &c. What is sin ? Go to an hospital ; see the wretchedness on every side ; visit, with the eye of faith, the torments of "the worm that never dies, and the fire that never can be quenched," &c. But, more than all, behold the bloody sweat in Gethsemane ; the anguish and sufferings of God's only Son on Mount Calvary, and then see what sin is. *Sinners*, poor, wretched, *sinners*, these were the objects that brought the blessed Saviour from his glorious throne, to suffer and die as a man. He saves from the guilt, condemnation, pollution, and power of sin. Notice that expression, *into the world*. Will he then leave the world a prey to sin ? *No*, this "WORLD," is a pledge, that "all the ends of the world, shall be saved and worship him." Notice that expression, "of whom I am chief." When we consider how now he had been labouring, (for thirty years, perhaps,) in the service of his Heavenly Master,

and what an extended blessing he had been to others; the ballast of his soul in this state of blessedness, was a growing conviction of his own sinfulness; I say growing, for compare 1 Cor. xv. 9, (written A.D. 59,) with Eph. iii. 8, (A.D. 64,) and that again with the text of this morning. From what could such a statement as this spring? 1st. From a constant recollection that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; the sins before, and the sins after his conversion were fresh in his mind; so that he says, not I *was*, but I *am* the chief of sinners. This is a great lesson for us, to be constantly in the lowest posture before the Lord at the remembrance of past sins. 2ndly. The amazing grace which had been bestowed upon him, contrasted with the corruption he found in his own heart. 3rdly. He saw more of his own heart, than of any other person's. A Christian knows all the wanderings, distractions, formalities of his own heart in worship, while to others he appears quite devout. 4thly. A nearer view of the Divine purity increases our sense of sin.

16. How Paul delights to magnify Christ. Some good men have supposed Paul's conversion to be a type of that of the Jewish nation; and that, as he was called by a divine appearance from unbelief and rebellion, so they will be by the visible coming of Christ. What a delightful truth is the forbearance of Christ, his long-suffering and patience towards sinners: this is not a selfish, partial, long-suffering, as those who hold self-righteous views would imagine; but as a pattern of grace to others;—"to them which should believe," &c." Faith is the great connecting link between the soul and Christ. How sweet, that not a word of holiness or goodness, but only faith, (which includes all these) is mentioned.

This passage has a good deal of obscurity connected with it; I suppose by the charge he refers to the 5th verse, where the same word rendered *charge* here, is rendered *commandment* there. He refers them to *love* out of a *pure heart*, and of a *good conscience*, and of *faith unfeigned*, and to all, the grace upon which he afterwards enlarged in the

11th to the 17th verse,—in short, to the blessed gospel with all its glorious issues. Oh, did we see aright, we should discern, that to know the love of God in Christ, first as a source of blessedness to our own souls, and then to use the sacred deposit for the benefit of others, is infinitely superior to royalty or riches, or any thing that this world can heap upon us. "*Son Timothy*," how sweet to see all the endearing relationships of life amplified and extended by the gospel. "*According to the prophecies*," &c.; perhaps this refers to some particular intimation at the time of Timothy's ordination to the ministry, that he would be a peculiar blessing to the Church. There is a reference to chap. iv. 14; but here we see the practical use of prophecy; it must not be used as a mere matter of speculation, nor as puffing us up with supposing we have a deeper penetration, and are greater favourites than others; but as a part of our armour: to illustrate this, the Tractarians do not see Antichrist described as Popery, and thus they are left defenceless against the attacks of the Mother of Harlots. Others do not discern the description of Antichrist in its last open form, and so are open to infidelity.

19. But prophecy is not the whole of truth—the whole of God's word is to be the object of our faith; we must not let go our weapons; the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. "*A good conscience*," first purged from all sin by the blood of Jesus, then by continual applications of that blood, continual in-comings of the Spirit, and by entire surrender to God and entire conformity through his grace to his word and will. There may be a certain kind of faith disunited with a good conscience, but not working any change in the heart, not working by love, not purifying the heart, but simply the reception of a form of doctrine into the head; it is not a real faith; it may be assumed only to please our fellow-men, while we indulge our lusts; there may even be a faith working miracles, without true faith or a good conscience. This good conscience some having "*put away*,"—conscience being an inward monitor, the *will* is connected with putting it away.

Now our aim should be to keep a "*good conscience*," by never sinning against the admonitions of our conscience; and when we do sin against light and knowledge, going directly to have it purged and cleansed by the blood of Christ; with examination and watchfulness, and exercising ourselves. Herein we must seek to maintain a "*good conscience*," for when slighted it easily becomes dull; from being dull it becomes hard; then it becomes seared as with a hot iron, and this is a very dangerous state; a scrupulous conscience, on the other hand, is to be carefully avoided, for that is the devil's whip for lashing the soul; while a tender conscience is God's loving guard to keep us from sin; and seeing the love of Christ, and the liberty wherewith he has made us free, while it keeps conscience tender, preserves it from becoming scrupulous. Well, some having put away this inward monitor, "*concerning faith have made shipwreck;*" whether this refers to final perdition or not, I do not know, probably some might suffer for a time shipwreck, and yet be recovered afterwards.

What a striking word, "*shipwreck*," the noble and precious vessel faith, having lost, in losing a good conscience, its rudder, helm, and every thing necessary for its guidance—dashed upon the rocks, losing all its cargo and treasures.

20. Mention is afterwards made of both these men, 2 Tim. ii. 17, and 2 Tim. iv. 14; it appears that they did not amend. What a depth of holy love and wisdom there is in God! We should have said—'What! deliver them over to Satan, he will teach them plenty of blasphemy:' but *no*, sin is so completely its own tremendous punishment, and Satan is so horrible a master, that those delivered to his power learn ultimately to hate his service, even when they do not escape from it. There are but two dominions; the god of this world, working in the minds of them that believe not; and Christ at the head of his Church. These men being excommunicated from the Church—from its ordinances and sacraments—were delivered over to the power of Satan. In the primitive

state of the Church it was considered a real privation to be excluded from the sacraments, and from Christian fellowship; but such is our degeneracy, that people now often willingly exclude themselves.

CHAPTER II.

1. The word "*therefore*" connects this with what has gone before, because the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, chap. i. 5, because "the law is good," &c., verse 8; because "the glorious gospel is committed to our trust," verse 11; because the sum of the gospel is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," verse 15; because this solemn charge is entrusted to us, verse 18; because Hymeneus and Alexander have thus made shipwreck of faith, verses 19, 20. "*Therefore*," I exhort: how striking that word "*exhort*," inferring our natural reluctance to prayer, and the great need we have to be quickened to it. This duty of exhortation, like all our other duties, I fear we greatly neglect. "*Exhort* one another *daily*," &c.; we do exhort one another to care for the health of our bodies, to take proper food, to gain earthly advantages; do we stir one another up to prayer first of all? I hope not one member of my family neglects prayer before they leave their bed-room in the morning, and before they retire to rest at night. A rich man takes care first to secure money in his bank, from which he may always draw. Now God is our banker, and our "*first*" care should be to get faith by prayer, a supply from Him for all our need. The world talks of a main chance, the Christian's main chance is to get his need supplied by God in prayer; but this is no *chance*.—"My God *shall* supply all your need." Phil. iv. 19.

Observe the fourfold expression with regard to prayer in this verse; a hurried few words will not suffice. First,

"*supplication*" for pardon; going to God with a confession of our guilt and misery; getting all our sin washed away in the blood of Christ—then prayer, and oh, what a subject! All we want for body and for soul, all that interests *us* we may tell *our God*,—intercession for our family, relations, neighbours, parish, the church to which we belong, our ministers, the whole Church of Christ, Jew and Gentile, then giving of thanks; this there is no end of, it is larger than any of the other three. Our highest enjoyment upon earth is communion with God in prayer. These prayers are to be made for all men; as our Saviour prayed, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," while men's lives are spared and the day of grace is continued there is hope for them: and oh, what a privilege to be allowed to pray for all, lest we should think our enemies are excluded; we are specially *told to* "pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us," they are God's instruments to do us good, so we should be instruments to do them good; we may bless God for their persecution, and we should seek to be a blessing to them by prayer. Perhaps one reason why wicked men do so much harm, is because we do not pray much for them.

2. Kings are particularly noticed, for oh, how much in a country depends on its king! look at the Roman empire under Constantine, our own country under Alfred, Edward VI., Elizabeth, and those monarchs who favoured the gospel! how, under them, truth was established; in our own land power and authority have such weight, and so many may be brought under the sound of Divine truth by this power being thrown on the side of religion, that it especially becomes us to pray for all, who by situation or rank, or talent, can influence the minds of their fellowmen; how should we then pray for our beloved Queen, so exposed to every temptation; were we in her situation we must fall every moment without special grace. "*That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty;*" godliness, our duty to God; honesty, our duty to man: it is more difficult to lead such a life in a

time of trouble. The pious in *our* land in the time of Charles I.; in *Scotland* in the persecution there; and among the *Huguenots*,—they all got into a very wrong spirit; a time of peace, such as we now enjoy, is the time when God scatters seed of holiness far and wide. Acts ix. 31. But this will be now but for a very few years, for there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation; how diligent should we now be in preparing for it.

3. A spirit of intercessory prayer is particularly "*acceptable to God our Saviour.*" Let us give an instance:—our Saviour is the grand Intercessor; "Lord, let it alone," &c. He is ever offering up the prayers of his people with much incense, and of him the Father says, "He is my beloved Son, in whom I am *always well-pleased.*" Abraham prayed for Sodom, the Lord heard every prayer; Judah interceded for Benjamin, and the whole course of their affairs was changed, and a tide of blessing came in. "*This is good.*" A Greek word, signifying beautiful, or fair and lovely; how beautiful must that be which is lovely in the eyes of Him, who charges His angels with folly, and the heavens are unclean in his sight;—it is not only good, it is "*acceptable,*" he will hear and answer it. What blessings may we thus be to each other! I have no doubt I am greatly helped in my ministry by my people's and my family's prayers, and they are helped by my prayers. I fear we greatly neglect intercessory prayer; the largest part of our Saviour's prayer, (John xvii.) was for others. "*God our Saviour,*" wonderful conjunction! *God*, infinitely holy, pure, good, righteous, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; *our*, wretched, polluted, miserable sinners. *God our* SAVIOUR—why *our* Saviour? the doctrine of election is here; he is ours, that we may help to save others; and perhaps it is said, *our* Saviour, as if to say, if he has saved us poor, miserable, rebellious worms, who may he not save?

4. What a sweet truth we have this morning—it runs through the Bible, first in that solemn oath "*As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but*

rather that he should turn from his ways and live," the same truth is involved in that "*God so loved the world,*" &c., and in, "a propitiation not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world," and in "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." From these sweet truths we learn that our God delights in our salvation. He is on our side, in the great work of our lives; He takes more pleasure in it than even the renewed soul; He longs for it more. (to use the language of men, in speaking of God.) "*To be saved*" from sin; now if God thus wills the salvation of all, how is it that any are not saved; even because of the stubbornness and infatuation of sin, manifested first in the devil, and now through his delusion, in man: to be saved from sin is salvation, then, from its gloomy darkness, its enchaining power, guilt, condemnation, damnation; but this is only a negative part of salvation: salvation in this life is a knowledge of God, a delight in his love; communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit; the spirit of adoption, forgiveness, justification, communion of saints in this life and in the life to come; to be raised out of a flaming world glorious and incorruptible; to repose in the bosom of our Saviour's love. Now mark the largeness of God's love, he wills that all should obtain this; the *will* of God may be viewed in different lights. 1st. That general love that desires the salvation of all. 2ndly. That will frustrated (to use an unsuitable term, but yet one which conveys the meaning of God's love being repelled by the stubbornness and infatuation of man,) and thirdly, the yet deeper counsels of his love in making his elect willing in the day of his power, that others may be blessed through them; we are all elect to outward privileges, let us come to Christ and give diligence to make our inward calling and election sure. How intimately the knowledge of the truth is connected with our salvation;—the truth shall make you free,—why is it put after salvation? perhaps, to show the sovereignty of divine grace, the first steps are of divine grace, it always goes before; what a powerful plea is all this to pray and intercede for all; for

as God is on our side, while there is life there is hope: with this I could have prayed with comfort for our worse enemy.

5. "*For there is one God.*" There is here an additional reason why we should pray for all men; for though the heathen make to themselves gods many, and lords many, yet it is the same God who sustains, rules, governs, rules, *will* judge them, and *will* judge us; and as children love each other as being born of one parent, so should we love and pray for them, as having one common Creator, and one kind and loving Father. A mediator is one who stands betwixt two separated parties. Our God is justly offended with sinners, and they are hating Him because of his very excellence; but through the death of Jesus, God is reconciled to us; it only remains for us to put away the enmity of our hearts; and what a Mediator we have, "he knoweth our frame, he *remembereth* that we are dust;" what a *remembrance* from actual experience, from having come in contact with our weaknesses and infirmities. Yes! exalted as he is at the right hand of God, Christ is our Brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Observe the Trinity—one God—the man Jesus—and Christ anointed with *the Holy Ghost;* see too, the elevation; the man anointed, or Christ, and ending in Jesus, or Jehovah our Saviour.

6. What a sweet truth we have brought out here, the *all* in this verse is quite as large as the *all* in the 1st. verse. Think then of the co-equal and co-eternal Son, having such glory, yet giving himself to all the weaknesses and infirmities of our nature, infancy, childhood, youth, labour, suffering, and at last death, perfectly fulfilling the whole law; and then suffering, notwithstanding his perfect obedience, its heavy penalty for our sakes as the vilest of transgressors. In a ransom for a captive, a sum of money is generally all that is required; but here is a case in which nothing but life for life, soul for soul, man for man, will satisfy the claims of justice. Jesus did give himself for us, did pay down with his own blood the full ransom price for our

redemption; and now all sin is pardoned in Christ, all things pertaining to life and godliness are ours in Christ. God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; come to Christ and all is yours; the road is open for you to return to your native land, provision on your road is provided, only receive all these by faith; nay, that very faith Christ will give you, all things are ready for you "to be testified in due time." I suppose at the coming of our Lord, and return of the Jews, there will be a step towards it; another step in the millennial kingdom; another in the judgment of the wicked dead, and the final consummation in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. What practical lessons may we derive, first, to come to Jesus to receive those treasures he has bought for us. 2ndly. As we cannot look on a human being, however wicked, for whom Christ has not died, how much hope, and pity, and prayer, there should be in our hearts for all. 3rdly. To walk in the glorious liberty we have in Christ; as ransomed, redeemed, captive; to take the liberty he has procured, and devote ourselves to his service.

7. "*Whereunto*," &c. Here he proceeds to show how the love of God has provided a means for making his pure truth known, even by the foolishness of preaching; how remarkably Paul himself was ordained (even by a revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven) to be a herald of peace, and of reconciliation for sinful man. "*I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not*" &c.; this solemn asservation refers to the grand truths which had gone before. God would have his love made as sure and plain as possible; and would strike at the root of that cruel unbelief which doubts of the love of God even after he has given such proof of it, as not to spare his only-begotten Son; unbelief is verily the most atrocious wickedness in the sight of God. "*Faith and verity*" the two grand things which we need;— the pure truth, and faith to grasp it; faith to say, God does love me, I rest on his faithful word, his word of promise. In the whole of this passage we find the way to do good to our fellow-

men, even *setting before them the truth*, with *prayer* ;—neither will do *alone*.

8. Observe, first the authority with which it comes, from one whose whole bodily presence was weak and contemptible ; who was reckoned as the offscouring of all men ; against whom kings and princes were arrayed ; yet he says *I will*. Remember what he said in verse 7, that he was the herald, and *sent* of God to declare his mind and will, so here we must look upon this *I will* as the word of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the Maker of all things ; and how full of loving-kindness is this will ; if we go to the mighty and rich men of the earth and obtain a gift from them, they will neither expect nor allow us to be continually repeating our requests. The Fountain of all gifts and blessings bids us *always* pray ;—"*that men pray everywhere ;*" happy state to be in ;—every place a closet for prayer; in company, in the silent desert, in the dark regions of the Inquisition ; while talking with others, to lift up our hearts in prayer ; this is what I want for my beloved family, we their parents watch over them now, but it will not be always so, perhaps, and I want to introduce my dear family and parish to a Friend who is always close at hand, ready to help, mighty to save, one who never leaves, never forsakes. "*Lifting up holy hands ;* " doubtless referring to the attitude, but yet more to the general elevation of soul :—*holy* hands,—prayer implies that we *have* come out and are separate ; that we are devoted to God ; do remember the command,—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God:" remember, dear family "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." "*Without wrath*,"—referring probably to what he said of intercessory prayer, for the monster Nero was in authority at that time, who covered Christians with pitch and tar, and burnt them as flambeaux. What, pray for him without wrath ? "*and doubting ;* "—the Greek word not exactly signifying unbelief, but those doubts which arise from the knowledge that some are eternally lost, that among "all men" are reprobates and those condemned ; he tells them to have

such thoughts and enter into such a truth as this, "God will have all men to be saved," &c.

9. This seems to be a contrast here between what has gone before, about the men; and I conceive what follows, refers chiefly to public instruction. How deep the wisdom of the Spirit in thus looking forward to the schisms and divisions of the Church. I mean in those sects, among whom the women, in spite of this plain direction, speak and pray in public. Here then, is a two-fold direction about the attire of women. 1st. That they should be modestly apparelled, 2ndly, that they should be adorned with good works. I am sure that there is a connection between our outward clothing, and the inward state of our mind; when we have on a shewy garment, it seems to destroy our humility before God. I do not suppose here, that gold, and pearls, and plaiting of the hair, and even costly array, are positively forbidden; in some, as in our Queen and the royal family, they are quite suitable. The Quakers here, I conceive, are wrong, whose dress is so peculiar, that you may know them wherever you meet them; anything leading to pride and ostentation is to be avoided.

10. "*But as becometh women professing godliness.*" &c. Good works are the peculiar province of women, not learning a great many languages, nor playing very well on an instrument; but, like our Great Redeemer, doing good in our several callings; mark what our profession is, *godliness*. being set apart, wholly dedicated to the service of God.

11. I cannot think how Quakers can, in the face of such a plain direction as this, teach in public. The relation between husband and wife, is made a beautiful type of the relation between Christ and his Church. By silence it is not meant that a woman may not ask questions, and gain information; we are told in another place that they should ask their husbands at home.

12. How positive the Apostle is:—"*I suffer not,*"—who art thou that sufferest not? 'In myself or in my body contemptible, the offscouring of all men, but in my spirit the

messenger of the Most High God ;' so that it is, "*I the Lord, suffer not,*" and when we remember, that, "*with the lowly is wisdom, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,*" what a sweet course has our God marked out for females, and what love is there in this provision of our Lord, that as one must rule, he would give to man the headship ; that so the female might be cherished and protected, and harmony and love in *all* promoted. What an irresistible power is there in silence ! I apprehend here, he specially refers to cases when the woman is right, and the man wrong : her first duty indeed must be to the Lord, but submission and silence are the course she should pursue;—silence gives time for prayer, and leaves room for the Spirit of the Lord to work ;—much may be done without authority. 1 Peter iii. 12.

13, 14. The order of creation, and of the fall, are made the grounds of this subjection.

15. But while their inferiority is thus pointed out in the preceding verses, now we come to the true glory of the female ; namely, that as she was the instrument in the fall, so she is the instrument in the recovery of our race. What is rendered "*in child-bearing*" might be more properly, "*through* child-bearing," through Christ would mean the same thing ; but by putting it in this way, he throws the true contrast to the deficiency of females, that as without man she brought sin into the world, so by a Virgin without a man, the Great Redeemer was brought into the world, and thus woman was the sole human parent of the Saviour. But this glory is only as she receives him, mark how Paul goes on, "*if they continue,*" &c., not merely *believe* ;—there is a temporary faith, which in time of temptation fails ; mark the gradation,—faith, the parent ; charity, or love springing directly from faith ; then holiness, or dedication to God, and sobriety ;—the temptation to all, and perhaps especially to females, being a levity of spirit.

CHAPTER III.

1. Here are many very instructive lessons to be drawn: one is, that there is in the church a divinely-appointed order and rank. Some now say, that every Christian ought to be a priest unto God, and therefore set aside this plain word of God; but there is a divinely-appointed threefold order; one, of the superintendent, such as Timothy, who was appointed to ordain and appoint bishops, or as they are now called priests;—and presbyters and deacons: now you see how our Church of England is founded on the Bible in the threefold order, only the name of bishop is changed to that of presbyter or priest. How can we reconcile what Paul says here with what James, when including the ministry, tells us in his third chapter, and first verse?—why we must take the truth in its fulness, and not merely view one side. I am sure after twenty five years in the ministry, I see more and more what a blessed work it is to make known the gospel and seek the salvation of our fellow-creatures; but I can enter too into St. James's statement, for it is a work of most awful responsibility. "*His blood will I require at thy hands.*" &c. We should pray that our God would put into men's hearts to desire the office of the ministry. Our religious societies, by great efforts, raise funds; but still more difficult is it, to find *men*;—so great is the want of the ministers of the gospel.

2. A bishop must have no just charge of guilt attached to his character in the face of the world, "*husband,*" &c. plurality of wives was common among the heathen; to discountenance which practice the Apostle limits ministers to one.

3. If we remember, that we are kings and priests unto God, what is here written especially for ministers, will apply to every individual Christian;—"*not given to wine,*" forbids every kind of self-indulgence, by which spiritual

life is hindered, and excites to every self-sacrifice by which it is promoted. "*No striker;*"—Here a quarrelsome spirit is forbidden, one soon irritated and ready to take offence. "*Not greedy of filthy lucre,*" how expressive the words are! I do think the Holy Ghost has a special hatred to covetousness; mark how he says, "*covetousness which is idolatry;*" then in opposition to all these views, comes in a bright Christian grace, patience, patient toward others, patient under suffering,—when temptations from within and from without assail us on every side, and our soul is encompassed with trouble and difficulty; then, in your *patience* possess ye your souls. The Lord direct your hearts unto the love of God and into the *patience* of Christ. "*Not covetous,*" again the Spirit warns of this disgusting sin, the exact meaning is here, far from the love of money.

4, 5. It is beautiful in these verses, to see the governing of a family, and of the Church of God, put side by side. Nothing is lost in a Christian's experience; one step leads on to, and prepares for another. The head of a family has not, as children are apt to think, a post of liberty and ease; there is much anxious care, and many trials, while there is great hilarity, peace of mind, and comfort connected with a subordinate situation. "*Having his children,*" &c., there is a great temptation to spoil children, and allow nothing but a flow of love and kindness toward them; but a parent, in the management of children, must remember two great principles, *one*, their fallen nature, and that there is a constant need of the correction of what is wrong, the other, the recovery made for them by Christ; and that there should be a constant leading through Him to what is right. In the heads of families, there must be a care of the bodies of those under them; for the culture of their minds, but above all, their spiritual minds. Here is, in these verses, a thunder-bolt against popery, which allows not of marriage in her priests. It is not a device of parents, whether or no, to exact obedience in their families; it is the positive command of God.

6. "*Not a novice,*" &c. Here the Apostle guards against

a peculiar temptation of novices or those only lately impressed with spiritual things; for there is often a great deal of temptation to spiritual pride, and fancied superiority in the delight which novices experience at the new birth unto righteousness, and the full shining of the Sun of righteousness, their newly-opened eyes, their realizing sense of the emptiness of those earthly things which once they loved, and the beauty of those heavenly things they have found; novices, therefore, are not to be put to the office of presiding or ruling over others. Blessed indeed is the state of a novice, in contrast to the being dead in trespasses and sins; as the state of a new-born babe is preferable to that of a piece of senseless matter; but like a babe they require peculiar watchfulness and care, "*lest being lifted or puffed up.*" A striking expression, showing how pride may exist with a reality of grace, and the devil knowing well how to use our remaining corruption, swells and inflates us till we think ourselves to be very great: perhaps there is not any way in which Satan assaults so variedly and constantly as by pride; it will assume such different forms, it will talk of sin and guilt to show how humble it is; we are very ignorant of ourselves if we do not know how much pride we have. I feel it my peculiar temptation in the scenes of public usefulness to which God in his grace calls me; my family may be tempted to it on my account. The idea, *puffed up*, is striking, because it shows there is no real foundation for it; it is all emptiness, our true position before God is as poor, wretched, guilty sinners, all God's gifts of grace, and making us means of usefulness to others, only increase our obligations and reasons for giving glory to Him. The condemnation of the Devil, is strikingly pourtrayed. Isa. xiv. 12—15. My dear children are most of them novices, and we have great need to guard them against this snare: if they watch and pray against it, God will preserve them till they come to maturer Christian age and experience.

7. A good character is a talent, whereby we may serve and glorify God, and as such is to be sought; not indeed at

the expense of following God's commands ; nor as seeking the honour which cometh from men, but in order to adorn the gospel of our God and Saviour : our conduct must be irreproachable ; no inconsistency by which religion may be blamed, and Christ dishonored. This good report must be of them which are without :—the children of God in their charity, will make allowances for us ; but the world has a very keen eye to discover faults in Christians ; but like Daniel, no blame must attach to us—even from them that are without—but in the matter of our God. The snare of the devil is his saying to the soul—Oh, now your character is gone, you may live as you please—so he chains us with his heavy, massive chains ; and what is the end, *hell-fire, everlasting torment.*

8. The deacons and deaconesses were the younger orders of helpers in the ministry ; and the peculiar temptations of youth being levity, he first mentions gravity. Now mark, cheerfulness is our bounden duty. "*Rejoice in the Lord always,*" but levity is to be avoided. "*Not double-tongued,*" some can be all things to all men ;—pious, with the pious, worldly with others ;—this we must flee from : "*Not given to much wine,*"—they had no beer in those countries, and there was a temptation to take much wine : "*Not greedy,*" we *must* be greedy of loving God and doing good.

9. The parallel of this is the 19th verse of chap. i. And what is here the "*mystery of faith,*" in verse 16 is called the "mystery of godliness : " this we are to *hold* and *keep.* Satan would endeavour to rob us of our faith ; look at the 1st verse of the fourth chapter,—"the mystery of faith ;" it is indeed a mystery, how feeble creatures can, in a world of sin and sense, see Him who is invisible, and live to God ;—the world cannot comprehend it, and attributes all manner of false notions to a Christian ; he himself cannot understand it, it is like a spark kept alive in the midst of the ocean, or the burning bush unconsumed : as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, one man was endeavouring to extinguish a fire by throwing water on it, while another kept it alive by secretly supplying it with

oil; so God continually sustains our faith, or it must fail. "*A pure conscience*," purged and continually sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

10. Our Church keeps very close to Scripture in this, and requires testimonials of good conduct in those who take orders.

11. The families of ministers ought to keep more close to God, and more unspotted from the world than other families, as being brought into a nearer relation to God than others. "*Slandering*" in the Greek means diabolical; the meaning of the word *devil*, is, accuser of others. What subjects for prayer and self-examination are brought before us in these verses!

12. How these verses condemn the Romish church, in its going in the very teeth of this plain passage, by forbidding marriage in their clergy. What may not be objectionable in other families would be so in a minister's, they should be devoted to the service of the Lord Jesus, and must in all things adorn the gospel of our Saviour; nor should we think that this is slavery; it is a high privilege and blessedness;—for we must be *all* (parents, children, friends, and servants,) altogether consecrated to the Lord.

13. The gospel principle is—"Unto him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have." As we are faithful in a small sphere, the Lord will be sure to open to us wider, and wider doors of usefulness and blessedness, and of future glory; for what a man soweth that shall he also reap; let us then, even the youngest, use our time and talents, and opportunities, for Christ now, and he will give us more; "*purchased*," not with money, but by faithfulness in a little. "*And great boldness*," &c., there are some who go creeping on with a timid faith,—but this, though it may be real and genuine, is not in general, a faith which God very largely blesses. We must be bold and courageous in our God; boldness at *first* may be rashness, we must attain to it by growth in grace, till we learn to bear the brunt of the battle. But it should be boldness *in the faith*,

looking to Christ as our Head, far above all earthly powers, and dreading only his displeasure,—desiring only his favour.

14. The Apostle might be saying—'a sad delay this, to be kept from Timothy, when I might be doing so much good;' but the Holy Spirit was at this time inditing by his pen, an epistle which was to be a comfort to the Church in all ages. Great feeling and affection there was in Paul's mind.

15. Timothy was a sound, fervent, steady, loving servant of Christ; still he needed further instruction;—we never get beyond the need of teaching. Paul takes occasion to give a threefold description of the Church:—1st. The house of God, in 2 Tim. ii. 20, it is mentioned under the type of the vessels in a house, and in Ephesians ii. 21, 22, they are described as the house itself—built on Christ himself as the chief Corner-Stone; a *house* in its *combination*, compactness, solidity, beauty, proportion.—2ndly. The Church as those separated from the world, consecrated to the praise and service of God; set apart by his grace as the inheritors of eternal glory.—3rdly. "*The pillar and ground*," &c.; pillar, that which upholds the truth, the ancient pillars having inscriptions hung on them. *Ground*, the continual stay and ground-work, and support. A Church only remains a church while it supports the truth.

16. "*Without controversy*,"—without doubt or questioning, even enemies allow its majesty. A Socinian said to me—'to imagine that the Creator of all worlds became an infant, and was clothed with human flesh! it is such an absurdity:' the mystery was so great he could not believe it, and indeed, really to believe this requires the highest exercise of faith. "*Of godliness*," or the right worshipping of God; now mark, we never worship God aright until we know God incarnate; then we see him *pure, holy, hating sin*, yet full of tenderness, *love, sacrifice, compassion for sinners*. "*God was manifest in the flesh;*" do I want to know my God's compassion and holy love, I look at Jesus weeping over Jerusalem;—all the titles of Christ

show that he manifests the Father;—"the Son"—"the Brightness of his glory"—"the express Image of His Person." The Papists in spirit deny God manifest in the flesh; they say, 'You must not pray directly to Christ, you must pray to his virgin-mother, she is a woman, and has tender, motherly feelings, Christ is a Judge.' Thus they shut out Christ; but what says Scripture, "He knoweth our frame, &c., he is touched with a feeling," &c. "*Justified in the Spirit.*" manifested really to be what he claimed, —by his miracles, his holy life, his suffering for us, the penalty of the law, his gift of the Spirit to all his children, by their holy, devoted lives, they are manifested to be the pupils of the Holy Ghost, and the children of God. "*Seen of angels;*" this is very interestingly brought in here, as showing the deep interest the angels take in what promotes the spiritual good of men; the angels are full of joy when one sinner repents: on the conversion of a sinner, his angel beholds with joy the presence of the Father; they take so deep an interest in the plan of redemption, that we read, "which things the angels desire to look into;" they learn in this, deep and wonderful lessons of the manifold wisdom of God. Eph. iii. 10.—of the love and character of God: The angels ministered to our Lord continually at his birth—at the birth of his Forerunner; at his agony; they hovered round his burial and his grave; they announced his resurrection; they concentrate the power of thought on this wonderful mystery, as much as any who deeply study a mathematical problem. Oh, how does this unite heaven and earth; the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

"*Preached unto the Gentiles;*" what, a Jew say this! What do they call the Gentiles? dogs, outcasts, uncircumcised, not among the favoured of God!—what do we learn here, Jesus is a Saviour, belonging to all the vilest and the most guilty. "*Believed on in the world;*" the world lies in the lap of the Evil One, it is his bantling, he would assume the supreme dominion; *but* the prey shall be taken from the mighty, he will take from him his armour wherein he

trusted, and divide the spoil. Look at our Saviour, so humbling himself, that for thirty-three years he lived in contempt, without a penny in his pocket, or where to lay his head,—spit upon, reviled, crucified,—yet the King of Glory, the Mighty, Co-equal Son of the Most High God; and this is believed in the world, and you and I believe it; what a mighty power works in us faith. See Eph. i. 18, 19. Yes, the Church is a spark in the ocean, a burning bush unconsumed. How continually should we use that beautiful prayer, "Lord, increase our faith!" "*Received up into glory,*" this is put last for two reasons; one, the glory is only begun, not completed; the other, the receiving up into glory, has an immediate connection with the contrast which the next chapter reveals.

CHAPTER IV.

Here, side by side, are placed the true church and the false church, the church of Rome above all others claims to be the apostolic, pure, only true church; now what stamps a church as true, is its holding the pure truth of God, (as our Church of England so remarkably does in its Homilies, Articles, and Liturgy,) not any external succession, for that is assumed by the Apostate church.

1. "*The Spirit speaketh.*" The Spirit has a deep fervent love to Christ, and where the honour of Christ is touched, the Spirit thinks it time to interfere. "*Expressly*" as a thing about which there shall be no doubt: how gracious this forewarning so long before the time of this deep delusion; how many a child of God has been thus preserved from falling:—"*that in the latter times;*" our Saviour speaks of the times of the Gentiles; which consist of 7 times or 7 periods of 360 years; the last half, or 3 times and a half, begins in A.D. 533 and is a period of 1260 in which this apostacy should be manifested. Now we have a direct proof of the truth of the Bible and the foreknowledge of God; for at that

time Popery rose and has since attained its present monstrous size. "*Men shall depart from the faith;*" (refer to the sermon preached for the Protestant Association, in which the departure from the spirit of the doctrines of the faith, while they hold the letter, is fully explained.) "*Giving heed to seducing spirits.*" Popery is the offspring and "masterpiece of Satan," as Cecil justly calls it. "*Doctrines of devils;*" the expression rather means demons, who among the ancients were a middle class between God and man; how completely the Romanists fulfil this in their saint-worship; how grateful should we be for having been born in a Christian land; and while we hate the abominations of Popery, we should feel most tenderly towards the poor deluded Papists. My dear family, let us get a firm grasp of the last two verses of the last chapter, and the first three of this, and we have a safeguard against Popery.

2. Read the legends of their saints, read their pretended miracles, and their legends, &c., the pretences on which the whole system of Popery is based, and you will understand what this means—but how can these things be? Go on and you see the reason;—"*having their conscience seared with a hot iron;* hypocrisy in religion tends fearfully to harden the conscience. I had far rather have to do with an infidel who did not know the truth, than with a hypocrite; oh, my family, keep a clear conscience, have nothing between God and your souls, but be open and ingenuous in the sight of God and man.

3. In this verse you may see what a bondage the service of Satan is, he envies our happiness—God our Father delights in and desires it. "*Forbidding to marry.*" The Roman Catholic is the only religion I know of which entirely forbids marriage to one class of men, their priests; "*and commanding to abstain,*" &c. Here is another marked feature of Popery; the whole system is one of restriction; the Benedictine order are entirely debarred from meat. God's love has given not only enough for our subsistence, but also for our enjoyment, in all the variety of food. Observe, believing comes before knowing;—we must give God

credit, just as I require my children to have faith in my wisdom and love towards them ; and then, following my directions, they find they have taken the path of happiness. We never know what real happiness means until we come to know the truth as it is in Jesus.

4, 5. From this passage we derive the sweet privilege of having grace before and after our meals. "*Every creature of God is good ;*" God beheld all things which he had made, and behold they were very good ; God gave all things to Noah for food, Gen. ix. 3 ; but afterwards, to distinguish the Jews from other nations, and to answer other important designs of his love, he gave certain restrictions. When the Christian dispensation came in for the whole world, this restricted system was done away, Acts x. ; and all things became allowable. There is much difference between this and abstaining from what will please the flesh and gratify the appetite. "*If it be :*" God heaps upon us daily, hourly mercies,—food and raiment, home and friends, health and strength ; and all he asks in return is a thankful spirit ;—how horrible is it not to be grateful for God's love ;—then all our mercies become a curse.

5. "*It is sanctified*" that is, set apart for a holy use—How is that ? why we must look at the real state of a child of God—an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, a servant of God, the food which nourishes him is set apart for a sacred use. "*By the word of God,*"—the word of God permits him to eat it, but more especially by the word and truth of God, he is called into a state of salvation ; and by prayer our God of love designs to give us a blessing for our souls while we are eating food for our bodies, and how delightful is it to be thus continually reminded of the presence and love of our God.

6. We gain an important lesson from this ; a truth which we know perfectly, we need to be constantly put in remembrance of ; just as the sunshine of yesterday will not do for to-day. I am sure, my dear family, I should find great loss, if I did not read my Bible in private, day after day, *These things*, referring to all the preceding, but especially

to the mystery of godliness, and the apostacy from the faith: To be put in remembrance by public ministry, by family worship, by visiting from house to house. "*A good minister of Jesus Christ:*" what! is it the summit of ambition, to be the servant of the Crucified One? yes, for he is Lord of Glory, and to be a good servant of Jesus Christ, is a higher rank than any title this empty world can give; thou shalt be a good minister, &c., but *if thou put the brethren*, &c. *First*, indeed, we must attain knowledge, but it does not say, If thou have attained to great knowledge then we must communicate it, not lock it up in our own bosom. "*Nourished up*," this implies a previous nurturing in the fear of the Lord, and the words of Scripture. Thus my children and family have been instructed by me year by year; "*words of faith*." Jesus Christ the grand sum of our faith, as by faith we receive them, as they are the means of communicating faith, "*faith cometh by hearing*," &c. and good doctrine, words of faith are the beautiful and profitable food for our souls; "*whereunto*," &c., Timothy had attained, but perhaps he was tempted to spend too much time in meditation, and therefore comes this exhortation to communicate.

7. "*Fables.*" Let us look at some parallel passages, 1 Tim. i. 4, vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16. Popery is full of them, in many legends, such as that of George and the Dragon: any thing by which the weak and ignorant may be deceived; but how are we to tell what are so, and what are not? By our only criterion, the word of God. Truth has, as it were, two aspects, *one*, solid and full satisfaction, for the craving of our immortal spirits; the other a guardianship against error: as John Newton says, fill the sack with wheat, and the enemy will find no room for tares. "*Exercise thyself rather unto godliness*," by reading the word, by prayer, by fasting, by meditation: here I apprehend, it specially means, searching the Scriptures; dwelling on its precepts, and bringing them out unto the life: now mark no one ever goes *asleep* to heaven. "*I press toward the mark,—fight the good fight,—labour for the meat that endureth to*

everlasting life." A wrestler practices much beforehand ; so a Christian should attain a holy skill in habits of godliness, this is a great principle to be brought into the life by constant watchfulness and prayer.

8. "*Bodily exercise profiteth little,*" or for a little ; we must indeed take bodily exercise, it is our duty to care for the health of our body, but all this is a very minor consideration : the body must be kept under, and brought into subjection. "*Godliness is profitable to all things* ;" oh ! did we but realize these things, what different lives should we lead. I do not mean a notion of them, as being God's word, but a real moving faith ; now *we* through infidelity on this point take great thought and care about worldly things, and neglect religion, because we think the one is profitable and the other is not. Godliness, reverence for God, bringing God into every thing, an entire consecration of every faculty to God, not only in our devotion and reading of the Bible, but in all our work ; doing every thing, because we believe God would have us to do it ; seeking his favour in every thing : now godliness is profitable for all things : true, we often see His children oppressed, persecuted, burnt alive : well, but look at the special comfort they enjoy, the support given to them, ah, it is far preferable to be persecuted with their sweet peace of mind, and approving conscience, than to be the persecutor with his troubled conscience and anxious restlessness : but generally even in this life, you see the children of God living in prosperity and contented happiness, while the worldling is a slave to riches, or perhaps to the yet deeper misery of vice. "Having *the promise of the life.*" &c. Let us look at them. Psalm xxxvii. is quite a collection of them. The close of Psalm xxxiv. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.*" "*And of that which is to come.*" Why if misery for the whole of our life here attended a life of godliness, still it would be well worth-while ; for to weigh time against eternity, is like weighing a second against a million of years. What is life to come ; why if we die before the coming of Christ, our

blissful spirit goes to Paradise, goes to the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, conveyed by angels, and is ripening for future glory ; and oh ! what tongue can tell the glory which awaits us, at the coming of Christ, the resurrection body ; the presence of God ; the everlasting kingdom.

9. He had before in this epistle spoken of a faithful saying in ch. i. 15;—now these two sayings must be taken together; neither will do alone ; the first indeed includes the second ; salvation includes holiness; but lest we should abuse grace, the second is added. A saying of a great man, is as much thought of here, as a saying of God. Many sayings are false and uncertain, here is one altogether faithful. Many sayings are applicable only to peculiar situations and businesses ;— here is one worthy of *all* acceptation.

10. To propagate gospel truth, the Apostle endured amazing toil and labour—so must we *labour*, (it is a strong word,) if we would spread abroad these sayings for the good of others;—"*and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.*" Here is the grand distinction between Christians and worldly men. The worldling trusts in his skill, his riches, his industry, his friends. The Christian trusts in God, and while the worldling looks to what the world says, the Christian searches the Bible to find what is God's will ; thus they are opposed to each other, and the Christian in endeavouring to promote godliness, is called obstinate and hypocritical. "*The Saviour of all men,*"—sweet title, all men are here in a state of salvation ; for all there is redemption in his blood—the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ; all are thus under a day of grace, and God does not immediately punish men for their sins, but gives them space for repentance ; how then are all not saved ? because they won't believe God's love, and the worst place in hell is reserved for those who reject the offered grace. Thus God is specially the Saviour of them that believe ; they are adopted into God's family, made partakers of his Spirit, and heirs of his glory.

11. It is to be remembered, both by minister and people—it is not a matter of option whether or no the min-

ister shall declare, and the people hear the word. As an ambassador of God, he comes with Divine authority—in the *command*—in the office of the ministry he teaches, both are to be attended to.

12. Avoid all levity and trifling, which might render thy youth despicable; and by firmness and decision, avoid liberties which might be taken with thy youth; every believer should lay this down as a grand principle, whether he be servant or master, child or parent, teacher or learner; to be a pattern, for I verily believe more is done by example, than by instruction. Why does it say believers? why not lovers, or patient, or godly, or devout? Because faith is the royal parent grace of all the others; it is the turning-point to believe and realize God's love to our souls, and walk in the light of that truth; to believe that our sins are pardoned by the blood of Jesus, and eternal life is, in Him, the gift of God to us. Thus believing is the grand distinction between the children of God and of the world. "*In word*," the Bible speaks much of our conversation—being holy "*in conversation*," The meaning of the old word is behaviour, conduct, a step higher than words, "*in charity*," or love—love to God and love to man; "*in spirit*," rising still higher, to having a single eye to God's glory; "*in faith*," "*in purity*." This includes not only freedom from all impure thoughts, all sensuality, and licentiousness, but an entire consecration to God, of every faculty. I found this passage a great comfort when in the ship, before arriving in Africa;—it is a good verse to add to our petitions in prayer.

13. The Apostle proceeds to give his dear spiritual child some directions as to his conduct. "*Reading*," both public and private, specially among the poor, and in the church. "*Exhortation*," applying the word read by practical direction, suited to the cases of the hearers. "*Doctrine*," explaining what we read, opening out its meaning.

14. We all have some particular gift, some of wisdom and knowledge, others of plainness and simplicity, or patience and perseverance. Now, these gifts come from the

Holy Ghost, and they are to be used, not for our own gratification and self-indulgence, but to be devoted to the glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to *profit withal*. Martyn says, 'If I followed my own inclination, I should spend all my time in indulging new thoughts passing through my brain;' but all must be devoted to the will and glory of God. "*Prophecy*," I suppose, taken not so much in the light of prediction, as the more general sense of teaching; "*laying on*," &c. much like our ordination.

15. "*That thy profiting may appear to all*," or rather *in all things*; first, by thine own maturing in wisdom, knowledge, and experience; secondly, by thy being an increasing blessing to others. What a sweet thought, that we cannot grow in grace ourselves, without being an increasing blessing to those around us.

16. "*Take heed unto thyself*," within thee is an immortal spirit; thou art in an enemy's land; within are traitors, in thy corrupt heart; without thou art surrounded by a tempting world, and an ensnaring enemy, Satan. Be thou aware of thy danger, thy Captain's eye is upon thee, thy help and resources are near, only take heed. "*And to the doctrine*," how little we consider as we ought, the weighty effect:—for every idle word we must give an account in the day of judgment. For good conversation; by thy words thou shalt be justified; all our words have either a destructive or beneficial tendency; take heed then to the teaching, "*continue in them*." It is easy to begin in what is right, but patiently and steadily to persevere, that is what the Bible so much enforces. "*He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*." "*In due season we shall reap, if we faint not*." I hope my dear children will never experience any falling back—"*so shalt thou be saved*." What blessed consequences; who can tell what salvation is? never shall we fully know, till we see "the heavens being on fire dissolved, the elements melting with fervent heat; the inhabitants of the earth who are *lost*, calling to the

mountains and rocks to fall on them, while those who are saved are caught up in inexpressible glory ; then and through the countless ages of eternity shall we find out what salvation is.

CHAPTER V.

2. What a beautiful propriety there is, in all the arrangements of the gospel. When we see a fault in an elder, we must neither pass it altogether unnoticed, nor yet harshly rebuke it as we are so apt to do ; "entreat" means not only beseech,—but exhort, charge.

3. The Apostle names two kinds of widows, pleasure-taking widows, and those who have given their hearts to God ; the latter he calls widows indeed, and directs that such shall be provided for and honoured, for honour includes provision.

4. It is a clear Bible rule, that those who have destitute mothers, or relations, should provide for them, and requite that tender care, and love and forbearance shown to them in their infancy. "Let them shew *piety* or rather kindness. "*This is good,*" &c. God is pleased with it, he accepts it, blesses it. What a book is the Bible ; every case is provided for ; never can we study it enough.

5. When it pleases God by a heavy stroke, to remove a husband, the prop, strength, companion of the female, she must not seek to drown her care by following the joys and pleasures of worldliness ; but must remember the affliction is sent to increase her spirituality ; that henceforth she may not lean on an arm of flesh, but may come up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved : there is a general truth here, whenever any earthly trial whether personal or family, is sent to us, it is with a view to our gaining a spiritual blessing ; the end of a widow's trial is that she may give an undivided heart to Christ : she trusteth in God; and as every care and thought had been told to her

husband, so now all is carried to God ;—she continueth in supplication, &c.

6. "*Liveth in pleasure,*" the exact meaning is liveth delicately,—seeking her happiness only in the things of this world ; is dead to the highest enjoyments of this life and is hastening to eternal death. What a mercy, my dear family, that we are not left to our own will as to the manner in which we live : We should like to be clothed in scarlet and to fare sumptuously every day, but what is the end of living in pleasure?—*eternal death.*

7. Authority is quite as needful in its place, as love or grace ; the reason is, "*that they may be blameless :*" all God's commands, though we may think them hard, have our happiness at heart.

8. A very perverted use some have made of this passage, in making it a cloke for covetousness and hoarding of money. The first meaning evidently is, that children and nephews should provide for their aged parents or relations ; no doubt there is an implied meaning, that parents should lay up for their children. "*For his own house,*" or more properly *kindred.* "*He hath denied,*" &c. ; it is directly contrary to the faith, the rule of which is, "faith worketh by love ;" faith may be denied by contrary practice, as well as by open disavowal. "*And is worse,*" &c. ; infidels or heathen have a common standard of what is right ; and our Lord's stirring question applies, "What do ye more than they?" The gospel standard is far above any other. Let us all learn to fulfil our relative duties as parents or children, masters or servants ; not only in our family but towards our parish, our country, nay, the world ; not only towards their bodies, but also towards their immortal souls.

9. How very wise are these directions,—the wisdom, in fact, of God. The first lesson we learn is, that widows are to be provided for. "*Having been the wife,*" &c. ; the Apostle entirely discountenances that licentiousness and impurity which was common among heathen nations.

10. Her good works before she became a widow, must have been evident to those around. Her domestic duties

must have been well performed toward her children. She must, according to the universal Bible rule, have used hospitality without grudging.—In eastern lands, where only sandals were worn, and the roads were very dusty, the general custom was first of all to wash the feet. Thus our Saviour, after doing so to his disciples, charges them to do so to one another. The general meaning is, to perform kind offices for others; "*if she have relieved the afflicted,*" visited the poor around her;—the end of this lovely character is the diligent persevering pursuance of these and other good works. Here we learn an important lesson; that while we are to do good generally to all, it is to be specially to them that are of the household of faith.

11. He evidently does not object to marriage in younger widows, see verse 14. but he thinks they will, by unsuitable connections, bring reproach upon the church. Oh! let us take care of ever waxing wanton against Christ; of leaving our first love; such a course, in Bible language, is adultery of the heart against God.

12. Damnation is not always to be understood as meaning eternal ruin, unless the contest proves that it does. Here, as in 1 Cor. xi. 29. it means judgment or condemnation. How intimately connected are faith and love;—when we fall back in one, we do in both.

13. Let *us* learn to be diligent, keepers at home, quiet, silent, patiently pursuing our own duties, and having our conversation, through grace, good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

14. There always is an amazing foresight in Bible rules, looking forward to the future corruptions of the church. In this is foreseen the mischief arising from the self-righteous bondage of nunneries and monasteries, and the habit of celibacy so cherished, nay, almost idolized, in the Eastern and Romish churches. The will of God is a will of love, (for where Paul says, *I will,* he merely speaks as God's ambassador, stating the Divine will,) he wishes us to have and enjoy all the endearments of the social circle and domestic happiness. "*Bear children,*" thus a suitable

employment is provided for the female, that of training up immortal beings to serve God. Oh! the depths of God's love in the relation of parent and child; the instruments of bringing them into the world, and then the means of diffusing among them the highest blessedness, and training them up for everlasting glory. "*Guide the house.*" The husband, labouring for the provision of the family, is relieved from domestic duties, by the female taking this upon herself, and as mistress of the house, ordering all for the comfort and happiness of the family. Where these things are attended to by the female, she takes away occasion from the adversary, and adorns the doctrine of God her Saviour.

15. The lusts of the flesh are the baits by which Satan tries to catch our souls and destroy them, for there is a hook hid beneath what appears so pleasant. How little we know of Satan's power and strength; he is called a roaring lion, the prince of the power of the air, the God of this world.

16. I am struck with the nobility of spirit of the early Christians, their principle was—Let us, if we can, take the burden on ourselves as individuals that the whole church may be spared.

17. I think it clear that our threefold order in the church of England is scriptural. The twofold kind, of presbyter and elder, in the Scotch church is also scriptural. Honour means provision or maintenance, as well as respect. Labour is needed in "*word and doctrine*" or teaching, from the amazing responsibility of the office, and the offence the truth gives;—great is the anxiety and toil requisite.

18. This opens a great key to Old Testament Scripture. This direction comes in among many others, but now we see the hidden meaning there is in it; so when we get the spirit of a Bible direction in our minds it will guide us in a thousand instances; it is our blindness if we do not see the Bible fulness.

19. The elder or minister having to reprove sin and take his stand in opposition to the torrent of evil in the world, lies peculiarly open to slander and reproach; therefore this

caution is requisite about listening to a charge against him.

20. This might be rendered "*them that sin before all rebuke:*" When sin is prevalent and all is giving way, then comes the temptation to be silent, but *then* the Christian must be,

> 'Faithful found among the faithless, faithful only he;'

standing firm to his principles. Observe the intense love in what appears severest in the Christian,—the spiritual good of those whom he reproves is to be his aim. Learn, too, another lesson here;—people when they follow a multitude to do evil think they are secure; but it is when iniquity abounds, God will rebuke and punish it.

21. What an august company does he bring together, God the Supreme Father, Governor, Judge, Jesus Christ the Lord, with his Church to the end of time, and the elect angels. When with the eye of sense, we see all around to hinder us from the path of duty, let us open the eye of faith, and behold all these glorious persons intently viewing our conduct, and the after-judgment where God will enquire into every action. It is very great benevolence and humility, for angels to joy in the conversion of a sinner; for I think the state of a converted sinner, hereafter, will be a higher state than that of angels: "Know ye not we shall judge angels," it shows therefore their great conformity to God's will. Partiality generally springs from some by-end of selfishness, or self-interest; all this must be laid aside by a Christian. How the Bible commends itself throughout, to the conscience, by its perfect righteousness.

22. There is in the Bible something adapted to every temptation to which man is exposed; this proves its Divine Author. These directions prove the Divine institution of the ministry, in opposition to the errors of those who maintain that every individual Christian being a Royal Priest, ministers are not requisite; it shews too the determination and previous preparation requisite. "*Partakers of other*

men's sins:" awful indeed is the responsibility of bishops in this view,—that where they use the power God has given them with thoughtlessness, in appointing unsuitable and wicked ministers, they are responsible for their sins. But the rule is a general one, and applies to all who having the power of placing others in various situations, by recommendations for instance, or in engaging servants, in all which circumstances, love and truthfulness are equally requisite. "*Keep thyself pure*," thy conscience pure from thine own sins, and from other men's, having no by-ends in view, but thy one aim being to please God, and do his will.

23. The temptation of the early Christians was just the opposite of our's; we are far too self-indulgent; they were tempted to a too rigid abstinence from the gifts of God's love; which was apt to grow into self-righteousness. This injunction is much guarded—*no longer water*. Timothy was not so very young now, and arduous duties were upon him; what might have been *proper* before, was not so now. A *little* wine,—no excess; and his bodily infirmities are given as the reason. No precise time is marked out for us about these things, for God will try our spirit, and see, whether we act from self-indulgence, or from gratitude for his gifts.

24. I am struck with the transition here; no Bible transition is without meaning. Now, the 24th verse might very naturally have come in after the 22nd; why put the direction about Timothy's bodily health between them: probably it is to shew that the gospel neglects nothing that is really for our happiness. The Gospel is just this, "God's plan guided by infinite wisdom and boundless love, for making us completely happy," not a system of severity and restraint. From this verse, and the following, I gather this important principle. Our conduct is stamped by our every-day conduct and conversation; what a man soweth that shall he also reap. Our glory consists, not in our possessions or outward splendour, but in our self-denial and self-sacrifice, which is the true seed-plot of our future glory: did we but realize this, surely we should be

more willing to take up our cross, and follow Jesus. "*Some men's sins are open beforehand.*" Where we see open and gross sin, or the heart wholly in the world, there, unless a change takes place, we can tell as though the judgment-day were already come ;—there is a man going to hell. The sins of others, are for a time hidden ; as in the case of Judas Iscariot, who for three years and a half was reckoned among the twelve apostles.

25. Some are clear daylight characters, bearing the image and impress of the Spirit, in its blessed fruits, love, joy, peace, &c. Others do good secretly, their character is much hidden, this may be carried too far ; we must keep the right balance between these two directions. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," and "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

1. All relations are remembered in the Bible: "*Under the yoke,*" all submission of our own will to the will of others we feel a bondage and restraint ; thus, even, the service of Christ is to carnal nature a yoke, "Take my yoke," &c. But I apprehend, this especially refers to instances of unbelieving tyrannical oppressive masters, and the direction is, "count them worthy of all honour ;" what, when they behave so ill ?—yes, they hold their office as your superior by the appointment of God, therefore honour that office. A Christian, while he would dare to burn at the stake, rather than deny Christ, yet durst not for the world dishonour his master,—the name of God is blasphemed when we act inconsistently with our profession.

2. Why, where is the temptation to despise a believing master ?—believers have one common Father, one hope, one holy table, and the distinction of rank is but for this world. Hereafter, the spirit we have been of here, and not the

station, will determine our rank; thus there is a temptation to servants, to put themselves on a level here, and to forget the distinctions which are appointed for the good and peace of society; the two distinguishing marks of a Christian are, faith and love.

Oh, what an association is the Gospel, large enough for *all*. Christ died for all,—gave himself a ransom for all. God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. This is God's own system of love, for the present and eternal happiness of our earth:—first teach, and then exhort,—mark the order.

3. Our words have a very great influence on the spiritual health of those around us; therefore let then our aim be, to speak that which is good to the use of edifying, knowing that this is not an unimportant matter, for by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned: observe the three aspects in which the true standard of our words is viewed; as wholesome words,—as the word of Christ, and words whose whole bearing is toward godliness—seeing God stamped upon every thing living, as if surrounded by God.

4. *He is proud*, or swelled out, not knowing *anything*, amid all his fancied wisdom, doting, or sick, in opposition to the wholesome words;—observe the good and evil put side by side in verses 3, 4.

5. Men departing from the simplicity of making it their aim to please God, get, through their corruption, into perverse disputings; an infidel denies the truth of the Bible, on account of the disputings men of corrupt minds have entered into upon it; but these very things prove its truth, as it has so clearly predicted them; "*destitute of the truth;*" —the truth makes us free, and delivers us from vain disputings; "the very acme of all he has been describing; such an awful delusion, as to suppose that the chief end of our existence is worldly gain: from all such withdraw thyself; come out and be separate.

6. "*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*" First of all, as it meets the approbation and favour of God; what

tender expressions he uses toward the godly, and promises never to leave nor forsake them ; it causes every thing to work for good ; here, this is great gain, it makes us a rich blessing to others, it secures our happiness in the day of judgment, and to all eternity ; with contentment ; because, though all this be true about the gain of godliness, yet there are temptations, trials, and afflictions to be met with ; but then all these are made to work for the eternal advantage of the godly.

7. Every birth, every funeral, is a proof of this. This verse is the counterpart to the lesson in the 8th verse of the 5th Chapter ; all our earthly possessions are the gifts of God's love ; lent to us for a few years, that we may trade with them to his glory ! Oh, that we may so realize these things as to set "our affections on things above, for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also."

8. The two grand necessaries in Eastern life, where they had little need of home or shelter, were food and raiment. The spirit of the direction is, to be content with necessaries.

9. *They that will*," whose aim and end it is :—Observe a fowler ensnaring a bird, and you have a picture of the way in which the devil snares and catches us with his bait—"*Drown men*," &c. Go through the history of Dives, and this is exactly explained.

10. How strange is it, that (when God has given us such directions as these out of his fatherly love, and when we are professedly a Christian nation), these rules are not quite enough for us, and we are not all willing to be guided by them ; but perhaps we, especially as a nation, are a money-loving people ; it is the idol of Britain ; "*a root of all evil*," because we depart from the simplicity of a Christian's aim, to love God supremely, and bestow our affection on money. This creeps in with loving the comforts of life ; then we get to transfer our affection, from the comfort, to the money which obtains it. Then creeps in selfishness toward our fellow-men, and pride, vanity, jealousy, and all the hideous train which eat out spirituality.—Now mark the next expression, "*they have erred from the faith*,"—faith

and the love of money are directly opposite, as the one comes in, the other is lost. Faith says, I will rely upon the promises of God to provide for me in the path of duty. Love of money says, I will be independent, and secure myself against anxiety and care :—but now, shall we not be respected, and honoured, and gain worldly honours and pleasures,—no, such as follow after these things, *pierce themselves through with many sorrows.*

11. Then the opposite course is marked out, and we must choose our path ; there are two kinds of righteousness ; one, in Romans ix. 31, 32, to be forsaken ; the other, in Philippians iii. 9, to be followed after. What a beautiful title of a Christian ; *a man of God*, an heir of his everlasting kingdom and glory. At our baptism, and confirmation, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, we become by profession *men of God*, let us act up to this title.

12. We observe the progression and beautiful order of the Bible : In the first Epistle, the apostle speaks of fighting the good fight, &c., in the second Epistle of " having fought," &c. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. What are the enemies to be contended with ? 1. The Devil, ever darting at us darts to destroy us, " Above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye may quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 2. The ensnaring world around us, ever seducing us into believing that this world is our rest, " This is the victory," &c. 1 John v. 4. 3. Our inbred foe, our own corrupt hearts ; faith purifieth the heart. This fight is emphatically good, other fights are bad. The original expression is very strong, *Agonise* the good *agony ;* it is a continual warfare and strife every day ; to-day we shall meet with temptation and must fight this fight well ; then what is faith ? A simple believing what God tells us, about a heaven to be attained, a hell to be fled from, a Saviour from sin ; so believing as to desire heaven, to flee from hell, and go to the Lord Jesus for salvation. " *Lay hold,*" &c. Oh, how good it is of our God to bid us lay hold on eternal life, such an amazing gift as it is. He says, I have it for you, it is all yours, only take it, lay

hold of it. This argues great eagerness and pertinacity. Well then, where is it? God hath given us eternal life, and this life *is in his Son.* He that hath the Son hath life; it is in Christ we must lay hold of him and his salvation. What is it? A life begun now in faith, hope, and love, and completed in the glory of the resurrection-body. "*And hast professed,*" &c. So have we *all* in baptism; and most of us in confirmation and the Lord's Supper. God has graciously given these pledges of his love to us, let us then, as devoted to him, be valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ.

13. Authority is very important for a minister; while he adheres in his charges to the mind and will of God, he stands in the place of God to us, and must as such be obeyed, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We must endeavour to attain to the constant sense of this. Wherever I am, God is here, he beholds me, "*who quickeneth all things,*"—every thing that has life, every singing bird, every beast of the field, every insect floating in the air, all is sustained and quickened by God; and above all, the highest kind of life—spiritual life—is quickened by him. Is there any grace we need, he has power to quicken it in us. "*And before Christ Jesus.*" In how many incidental ways the divinity of our Lord is brought in in Scripture. Here his omnipresence is spoken of, and his being equally a witness with the Father, proves this great truth: what is translated *profession* in the 12th verse, here is rendered *confession.* In Matt. xxvii. 11. and John xviii. 37, he boldly confesses the truth, though he knew the mockery, and reproach, and ridicule of his kingly office that would follow. Now why does he specially mention our Saviour in this charge to us? Because he can feel for us; he has gone through it all, he shrank from it as we do, he was tempted like as we are, sin only excepted, but was carried through by that Spirit which was given to him without measure; and following his steps, we must in the face of the world's contumely and re-

proach boldly confess the truth. Such truth as our Saviour's coming again, and a speedily coming judgment; the vanity and folly of earthly things, because God is thrown out of them. May we have grace to live, though in the world, yet above the world, having a different spirit from it.

14. All the commands he had been giving before, to flee the love of money, to follow after righteousness, &c. to fight the good fight, &c. to lay hold on eternal life—all these he charges him to keep faithfully—that at the coming of the Lord he may not hear the words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant," but "Well done! good and faithful servant."

15. I know nothing, after a diligent study of the Bible, to make it unlikely that in our life our dear Lord shall return, and that solemn judgment take place in which every action, every hidden thing shall be brought out into the noon-day light; and our Saviour find what we have done with each command, and all our privileges. I know not a more stirring motive to live to God than his speedy return. May we ever live as those who have to pass under this solemn review. He then gives a description of the great God, and what a description it is!—first, he is emphatically the Blessed one, the perfectly happy one; now connect this with the thought that he is also the source of happiness to all his creatures; a full overflowing fountain of happiness—the "*only Potentate*," having almighty power; all other power derived from him; his alone original, underived; all others entirely at his command, entirely subordinate to him. Here are two rocks on which our souls may rest, infinite happiness and infinite love conjoined. "*King of kings*," &c. He has been commanding us to flee the love of money; now our primary end is generally here not so much the positive love of money, as of the comfort, honour, pleasure, dignity it gains for us; but here we rise to the true source of all these, and see that in following righteousness, &c. all these and infinitely more shall be ours ultimately.

18. This must be taken in the same light as the *only*

Potentate, meaning the original Author of immortality, and its bestower on all others. If riches, honour, or pleasure could give me immortality, I might pursue them, but Death comes and leaves them alone, but strikes the possessor. Shall I not follow Him who has, and will give, a blessed immortality, even the gift of eternal life? "*Dwelling in the light*," &c. What an idea does this give us of the greatness of God! See Psalm civ. 3, and Exodus xxxiii. 20. In an infinitely greater degree than the dazzling effect of the sun, does the glory of God affect his creatures. Look at Rev. i. 17; see Isaiah vi. how he was oppressed by it: but there shall be a time when, compared with what we see now, we shall see him face to face, and know as we are known,—though, even then, the following clause of our text will remain true; for the great Creator must ever remain unsearchable to the creature. Jesus Christ is the grand medium by whom we shall ever know the Father, (John vi. 46,) especially in the millennial kingdom; after that, we shall attain to a yet higher step of unutterable glory, when God shall be all in all. How does such a passage as this expose the vanity of the baubles of this transient world, and shew us what is really worth pursuing! Well may every Christian add, "*To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*"

17. This is just like our Saviour's lesson, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven;" and teaches a most important truth, that our treasure consists not in what can be seen by the eye and touched by the sense, but in what is unseen and eternal. The Apostle's returning again to the subject of riches, though he had said so much about it before, may teach us how exceedingly ensnaring riches are, in that the rich need so many cautions. This may refer to mental riches, or other talents or possessions of any kind God may entrust to us. The peculiar temptation of our country, America, and other European nations in these days, is admiration and love of money. First, he charges them negatively, "*that they be not highminded.*" Why, surely, if highmindedness were not altogether wrong, it

were more suitable to be highminded about our moral or literary attainments, or specially our spiritual character, which most likens us to God and the holy angels. But riches, more than any thing else, make us highminded; there is so much bowing down to and respect toward the rich; the lusts and pride of the heart are so continually called into action by riches, that we have to be most thankful to our God if this snare is not in our path. "*Nor trust in uncertain riches*," because they so often make to themselves wings and fly away, "*but in the living God;*" feeling that having our Father's love and care, we are as safe and secure as if we had millions of money, "*who*," the living God whom he had been describing, "*giveth*," denoting the freedom, the bounty, the constant flow; "*richly*," all that we had hoped for in laying up riches here, freely supplied "*all things;*" what largeness, what bounty—*all* for body —*all* for soul "*to enjoy.*" This reminds of the anecdote of the poor woman who, sitting over a dry crust and a cup of water, said "What! all this, and Christ beside." If we have Christ, then all is enjoyment—the sunshine, the air we breathe—all is turned to enjoyment. This is a very favourite text of mine.

18. What a delightful path is marked out here, especially for the rich, but also for all who have talents entrusted to them;—to be like our Saviour, going about doing good. Jesus had little, in the way of property, to bestow, but he had heavenly wisdom; and oh, how richly did he dispense it in his sweet discourses: he had the power of working miracles. You observe, he worked no miracles to give money, but many received both spiritual and earthly blessings from him. "*That they be rich in good works*," like the saying of Solomon, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Good works are the only things we read of as following us to heaven. The wealthiest man will not take a penny of his money, an acre of his land, or even one of his jewels to heaven, but he may take all the ten thousand ways in which he has helped others.

"*Ready to distribute.*" The idea is that of a farmer sowing seed: how foolish should we think him to be so careful of his grain as to withhold enough for a crop; yet there is much of such folly in a far higher kind of sowing. I want, my dear family, to get a real scriptural view of this great principle. What we part with to relieve the afflicted in obedience to the will of God, is not parted *from* us, but secured *to* us: our saved money is not what we have in the bank, but what we have in the treasury of heaven. "*Ready to communicate.*" The word is *sociable*,—to communicate; ready to impart to others our blessings, from a large spirit of loving others as ourselves.

19. Though we must most carefully guard against any idea of human merit, yet the mercy of God is manifested by his promising to reward our imperfect works and services: the word foundation is a strong one, not setting aside the great foundation, but implying a secondary one, as in Eph. ii. 20. In verse 12 we are told to "fight the good fight, and lay hold," &c. Now, laying hold on eternal life is made to follow good works; how is this? It is like reconciling Rom. iii. 28 with James ii. 24. It is reconciled in Matt. xxv. 40, even *faith in Jesus working by love to our fellow-men.*

20. What had been *committed* was the pure gospel, which he is here charged to keep pure and uncontaminated, and undefiled from vain babblings, or Popery on the one hand, and oppositions of false science or infidelity on the other. Now these are just the dangers of the present day. Whatever we have of divine light and knowledge is a sacred trust and deposit: just as we put money into the hands of a banker, expecting to receive interest or profit from it—so the Lord entrusts us with the gospel, that through us it may be diffused to the good of others. "*Vain babblings*,"—the ave marias and pater-nosters of the Papists are vain babblings; so are also our prayers, when we repeat the words of prayer with our mouths, but our hearts go not along with it.

21. The grand point is always *the faith;* to keep hold of

free pardon through the blood of Jesus, without any goodness of our own to merit it; free justification through his merits; the undeserved love of God towards us; eternal life, a free gift of God's love to us. Satan trys in every possible way to rob us of our *faith*. Then there is that sweet *conclusion* with grace, as the epistle *began* with grace. And thus we end an epistle which has afforded us so much light and instruction.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO TIMOTHY.

This epistle is rendered more interesting by the fact, that it was written, it is believed, very shortly before Paul's death, and was the last writing of that blessed Apostle which we have; consequently, we may expect in this a fuller display of gospel grace, nor shall we be disappointed.

1. "*Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ,*"—here is the weight and authority of the whole: the whole comes directly from the mind and love of Jesus. Paul was but his messenger, "*by the will of God;*" bringing in God the Father, showing his entire concurrence; like that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" "*according to the promise,*" &c. Compare this with Titus i. 2, and see the depth of love and infinite wisdom in the mind of God, which this opens to us. God, before the world began, planning with his Son his eternal counsels of love; promising to give him an elect people to share his eternal glory; knowing us, individually, before the creation of the world began.

2. What endearing relationships the gospel brings. We do not hear of Paul having any children, but he was a spiritual father of a vast family, and among them Timothy was a dearly-beloved son. Observe the growth of love

from the last epistle ; before, it was *mine own son ;* now, my *dearly beloved*, &c. ; *before, our* Father, now, a more extended relationship, *the* Father. Now these three gifts are just what we want ; grace for our guilt,—mercy for our misery,—peace for our troubles and anxieties.

3. If we have a real spirit of intercessory prayer, it is a great matter of thanksgiving, for it is such a delightful part of prayer ; it is so disinterested, it is so pregnant with blessing to others, it makes us so like God, and brings us so near to him, that it is the greatest blessing we can receive. "*Whom I serve*," by this we learn that Paul's parents were pious, and bringing him up in the fear of the Lord ; and though his conscience was very dark, yet, because "he did it ignorantly through unbelief," the Lord had mercy on him. And now he could say, "*I serve with pure conscience*," &c. ; how is the conscience made pure first of all ? its numerous stains and corruptions are washed out in the blood of Jesus ? thus the conscience is set at liberty, and the will is engaged to serve God, and the happy soul stands complete before God in the righteousness of Jesus. The conscience, to be kept pure, must be continually sprinkled with the blood of Jesus ; as Paul says, he exercises himself, Acts xxiv. 16., "*without ceasing*," in every prayer night and morning. In almost every epistle, I think, we hear of Paul's intercessory prayers.

4. When we have been absent from those we love a long time, we long very greatly to see them. What an endearing religion that of Christ is, no moroseness, no want of the tenderest affection—"*being mindful of thy tears.*" No doubt when Paul left Timothy alone at the difficult post of the superintendence of a new church, he could not forbear weeping at losing his dear spiritual father. How is it we scarcely ever hear of the laughter of the children of God, but very often of their tears ? *now* we go forth weeping, bearing precious seed ; this is *our* time for tears, but soon sorrow and sighing shall flee away ; not another tear shall be shed, but God himself shall wipe them all away. "*That I may be filled with joy* ;" how striking the

contrast is here ; no doubt Timothy would be cheered on reading it, and would say, Let me seek to be joyful too.

5. It is truly delightful to see such pictures of family religion. "*Unfeigned faith*,"—there may be a mock faith, when a person may attend church, hear the word of God, and know the theory of the Bible, and yet not truly believe there is a heaven, or a hell, or a judgment, or that God loves them with unutterable love ; but where there is true genuine faith, I say, I am as sure as I exist, that there *is* a lake of fire in which the wicked dwell for ever ; that God does love me with unutterable love ; and this true faith makes the difference between a child of God, and a child of the world. Now *this* we cannot work in our own hearts ; it must be wrought in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost ; it is the gift of God, he will give it to us if we ask him, he will not put us off with mock faith, but will give us true genuine faith. Lois doubtless lived long before the birth of Christ, and obtained faith, as David and Isaiah and Jeremiah did ; and then brought up her daughter Eunice to serve the Lord, and attend to his word, and thus she too obtained this precious faith. I am struck how the mothers in the families are specially mentioned. Oh, you that are mothers, train up your children to serve the Lord ; what a blessing you may thus be. My own dear children had a grandmother, in whom dwelt this unfeigned faith, and I trust it does in their mother, and so may it in them. The true Christian love is a far stronger tie than any natural one : Paul was filled with joy when he remembered Timothy's faith. Oh that we may all share this happy Christian love !

6. First, I observe the gift that is in us, which must be stirred up—which gift is not a spirit of fear of man, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.

7. It is not a spirit of fear of man that bringeth a snare, nor of mere "*dread of God ;*" *reverence* must be mixed with *confidence and love*, "but *of power*" to withstand the corruptions of our own hearts ; to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Who is he that over-

cometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" And of love, ardent love chiefly to our fellow Christians as the children of God, but a yet larger spirit, real love to all our fellow-men; longing over even the wicked, to save them from their wickedness; the true Christian is a man of love, he *must* love, but this love will be connected with wisdom and discretion; "*and of a sound mind;*" a parent will have a very *weak silly mind* if he indulge his children; a sound mind will make him, with the highest and most difficult exercise of love,—punish what is wrong. Well, now, *I* need these precious gifts, *you* need them; in our baptism we promised to serve the Lord Jesus, and he on his part promised to give to us *whatever we need.* If we will but ask him, these gifts are ready for us in him. Let us then *ask of God* who giveth to all men *liberally*, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given us; but it will be given in the use of the means of grace; it was given to Timothy in the solemn ordinance of prayer, and his consecration to the ministry, so must we, by the means of grace, *stir up* this gift; as a fire will gradually grow dull and ashy, and need stirring and making up afresh, so shall we need the continual fuel of the word of God, and the stirring up of *family prayer*, our *holy sabbaths*, and all the means of grace.

9. *Who hath saved us.* See, my dear hearers, what a full assurance of faith the believer may, and should possess; so that without presumption, we may say, "*He hath saved us.*" But from what, and to what, are we saved? it is *from* the punishment, the curse of sin, that we are saved by the atonement of the Lamb of God, and not only so, but we are saved *to* the glories of heaven. First, then, we must know and believe that God sent His only Son to die for us on the cross; this is the foundation-stone upon which the building is to be raised, "*there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved.*" Then the next step is this, when we firmly believe that all our sins are pardoned, then we receive the Spirit of God, to enable us to love Him, and to delight in Him. You are called with an *holy calling*,

to live a life of holiness, of love to God and men, and of walking with God ;—you all know what pleasure there is in friendship ;—when a person is particularly kind to you, you feel him to be your friend ; this is just the feeling you should have towards God, your best Friend. *Not according to our works.* If it were according to our works, what would be our sentence ? "Take those rebels and cast them into hell-fire ;" but Oh ! how different from this, is the love of God. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." "Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely." "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." &c. Here are some of the promises of God to you, so that we have the fullest testimony from God's word, of His willingness to save you. He appointed this way of salvation for you, *before the world began.* If you are lost, you lose yourselves, but I hope this will not be the case with any of you. Oh be fully persuaded of God's love to you poor sinners, through Christ ; you cannot love God, unless you believe the love *of God* to you. God enable you to do so !—

10. *But is now made manifest.*" &c. He is here speaking of salvation, both from eternal condemnation and ruin, and also to everlasting life and glory. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John. iii. 36. Then notice how this is made manifest,—*by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" By his coming down to our earth as a little child, by his life among men, by his cruel death on the cross, by his resurrection and ascension. Here we may see, in a peculiar degree, the love of our Heavenly Father. It is through His goodness that we enjoy the light of the Sun, that we breathe the air of heaven, that we eat of the fruits of the earth, that I have my tongue, my ear, my eye, my mouth, my feet, my hands ; but in the

death of Jesus. I see this in a far higher and wider light. "*Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light.*" The word *abolished* might be rendered *evacuated*, made *death* empty and vain; not that death is removed,—men still die daily, but the sting of death is taken away. We have many books which were written full 1800 years ago, before the gospel was preached, and these contain the reasonings of the heathen writers, on the subject of immortality; some believed that men would be immortal; others thought it exceedingly doubtful, and some utterly denied it; but they had no idea of the resurrection. Now when the gospel was proclaimed, it was like introducing a candle into a dark room;—when the candle is brought in, the darkness, which before rendered everything dull, and gloomy, and invisible, is removed, and we see the beautiful furniture, &c.; so when the gospel is brought home to our hearts, it makes death our friend. The poorest of you, my parishioners, may know more of the resurrection from the dead, through your Bibles, than the wisest of the heathen philosophers. The gospel brings life and immortality to light,—spiritual life here and immortal life hereafter.

11. "*Whereunto I am appointed a preacher*" &c., i. e. unto that gospel which brought "life and immortality to light;" the meaning of the word preacher is *herald*—when peace is made between two armies in battle, a herald is sent to proclaim it; and when peace is made, through the mediation of Christ, between God and man, the ministers of God were sent to proclaim it. An apostle means the same as a missionary or messenger; one sent from God, and a teacher is one who explains things to others. The Gentiles, i. e. all the nations of the earth, so that there is not a man, woman, or child, in the whole world, to whom the Gospel is not sent.

12. "*For the which cause I also suffer.* What! did God let the great apostle Paul be put into prison? did He let him be bound with chains, and be called a pestilent fellow, the offscouring of the earth &c.? Yes, He permitted it all.

Well, then, did not Paul feel very much ashamed, when he had all this reproach to suffer? No, he knew in whom he believed; oh! what a blessed state is this, he knew the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus, that He is the only true and living God; and, therefore, he was persuaded that he was able to keep that which is committed to him. Oh, my dear people, learn to commit all that is most dear to you, to the Lord Jesus; your body and soul, your cares, doubts, and fears, commit them all to Him, and you will never repent for having done so. St. Paul knew that if he preached the Gospel, he must bear reproach for it; but he knew that a glorious crown in the heavenly kingdom awaited him; he knew that his "light afflictions, which were but for a moment, were working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Unto "*that day;*" what does this mean? we will try to find out, it is mentioned in the 18th verse, but it is not explained there; but in the chap. iv. 8. you see it more clearly; but yet farther look at 2 Thessalonians vii. 10, there you see the meaning of it; it is that day when our Saviour shall descend, and the dead saints shall be raised, and the living changed; then they shall all meet the Lord in the air; the saints shall all have their portion assigned to them; and then Christ shall return with His saints to judge the nations of the earth, and to reign with great glory; this day of judgment St. Paul kept constantly in view, and this made him work with all his heart for God.

13. *Hold fast*," &c. These words "*hold fast*," mean the same, substantially as the expression, "*keep by the Holy Ghost*," in the 14th verse, and *the form of sound words* means substantially the same as "*that good thing which was committed unto thee*." Here is a beautiful and simple description of the true Christian; he holds fast the word of God (wholesome or healthy words, see 1 Tim. vi. 3.) in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Observe the words *hold fast*, this does not mean, keep your Bible always in your hand, or in your room, but keep it in your mind, and in your heart. Then notice here the doctrine of the

Trinity, which is so constantly brought out, that you may find it almost all through the Bible. "*I know in whom I have believed*," &c., verse 12. There is God the Father ;— verse 13. "*in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus* ;"— and here in verse 14 "*keep by the Holy Ghost*." &c. Oh, what a blessed gift is the gift of God's Holy Spirit ! it is the Spirit which strengthens us against temptation, and enables us to do anything which we have done or are doing to the glory of God, (and this is to be obtained by prayer,) and he will never leave you, nor forsake, till he bring you safely to the shores of the heavenly kingdom.

15. There a peculiar danger in any fresh, and new trial to the children of God. St. Paul's present situation, was this : He had brought the Gospel before the emperors of Rome before, but he had now the duty of bringing it before Nero, and he well knew the consequences of this. Many devoted Christians, who had confessed Christ boldly before some of the governors, shrunk from confessing him before Nero, from whom they expected to receive the cruel sentence of being cast into the amphitheatre to the wild beasts, there ready to destroy them. I do not, however, think, that St. Paul meant anything further than that some of the Christians, who had come from Asia to Rome, where they were then staying, had turned from him, and not the Asiatic Christian Churches themselves ; neither does he mean that they were finally apostates from Christ ; they were not like those of whom it is said, "They went out from us because they were not of us ;" these were, I doubt not, devoted Christians, but love of the world, which was not yet extinct in their hearts, and the fear of man which bringeth a snare, led them to shrink from a hearty bold confession of Christ. He then mentions two that had fallen away. "*Of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes :*" I suppose that these were two, of whom he had hoped better things, or perhaps whom Timothy knew intimately. See how their names are stamped in the Bible, with unbelief and love of the world ; how eternity cleaves to all we do ; we reap hereafter the fruit of the seed which we are now

sowing, throughout eternity. "*Phygellus and Hermogenes*" will be stamped with this, not so much stamped by God, as by their own unbelief. Let us see that our names are not stamped with it; for, I believe, and expect from the testimony of the word of God, that we are very near a return of these times of persecution, and of trial; and we should endeavour to prepare for it; for if it comes upon us by surprise, it would be very likely to overcome us; but if we are looking for it, and looking upward for assistance, our minds would be strengthened to meet the trial. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." But with the Apostle's usual spirit of love and grace, he could not dwell on "*Hermogenes and Phygellus,*" without turning directly to "*Onesiphorus,*" as a contrast to their characters; and you may see this throughout the Bible, how these opposite characters run parallel through the chapters. Saul and David, Cain and Abel, and many others. "*The Lord give mercy* (we all need mercy,) *to the house of Onesiphorus.*" I doubt not that many of the mercies to my house, have been sent through my labours for the cross of Christ. "*Onesiphorus*" was not ashamed of the Apostle's chain; when the children of God are despised and neglected, then the Lord gives us a great advantage in that opportunity for defending them, and refreshing;—and see here, how this humble follower of the Lord, was able to refresh the apostle Paul. We are all dependent on each other, and may all be comforts to each other, Parents to children, and children to parents, masters to servants, and servants to masters. God has so linked us together, that we can none of us do without the other.

17. Rome must be considered as much like London, excepting that in Rome there were perhaps more splendid buildings. It was to Rome that Onesiphorus then went, and what were his motives for going to this great city? It was not to see the splendid amphitheatre, where it is said that more than 150,000 people assembled to witness the gladiatorial fights; no! it was for no reasons of this kind, that "*Onesiphorus*" went to Rome; it was to search

diligently and unweariedly that he find a poor prisoner bound with chains for the sake of the Gospel. And then what was the Apostle's prayer for him? That he might find mercy of the Lord in that day; Oh, what will it be to find mercy in *that* day; you see St. Paul's heart is so full of *that* day that he gives it no further designation; just as we speak of an individual, to whom we are especially attached, as my Father, or my child. It is mercy, that will say to us in that day, "Come! ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Mercy will open the gates of heaven to us, and give us our portion of glory; then observe here the *many* things. Timothy was with St. Paul at Ephesus, and that is why he says, "*Thou knowest*," &c. Every thing that we do for Christ now, will be recorded in his book of remembrance, just as this kindness of Onesiphorus is recorded in the Bible. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, *and their works do follow them*." Oh, let us remember how *many things* the Lord grants us in creation, in providence, and highest, in Redemption; and may He grant us this by His own Spirit.

CHAPTER II.

1. In this verse we have the doctrines of the gospel, and in the next, the church of Christ, propagating those doctrines. "*The grace that is in Christ Jesus;*" what is it? Grace, you know, is the free favour of God, Jesus is the link which connects man with his Creator, by shedding of whose blood all our sins are forgiven; and notwithstanding all his righteousness and holiness, God looks down on our sinful world, and waits to be gracious to every human being; now in this grace, be strong, not in your own resolutions: "Without me ye can do nothing," the grace of Christ is our true strength; we must be strong

in the knowledge of this grace, in the confidence of it, the maintenance of it, the diffusion of it, "Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature."

2 How in the work of the ministry, we see the kindness and love of God; for Christianity must have sunk, if a body of men had not been set apart to maintain and testify the pure love of God in the gospel; we see here too, the divinely-appointed orders of our Church. Paul appoints Timothy to be head of that Church, who has himself to *commit* it, (how striking that word is, marking the solemn deposit of the truth) to faithful men. Our Church of England takes every precaution to obtain only the admission of faithful men into the ministry, by public notice, with permission to all to state any reason for their not being admitted; by requiring testimonials of their conduct;—but the Church of *Christ* has erred in not hindering the entrance of unsuitable men. "*Among many witnesses,*"—the great things of Christianity were not done in a corner; the miracles, such now, as the feeding of the 5000, were witnessed by vast masses. There is quite light enough to convince a candid mind; quite enough to convince a mind searching after truth, while there is darkness enough to give a *shadow* of an excuse to those who wickedly reject it. A man may be faithful without being able to teach,—both are required.

3. This brings out the great truth, that now is a time of warfare and conflict between those two natures which the Christian ever carries about with him—between the flesh and the spirit—the world and the Church—between Christ and Belial;—it is frequently and variously mentioned in Galatians v. 17; and a very full description in Romans vii. 14 to the end. Now, what has a soldier to do? To obey most promptly the word of command from his officer. I have seen the exceeding stillness which the word 'Attention' produced, on upwards of 1000 men, who were standing talking together. Now, our book of regimental orders is the Bible; we must keep close to it. Our God, in his love, has enlisted us all by baptism, into the army of

Christ, before Satan had power to work upon our minds: the evil is, we mistake our enemies for our friends: we think, in the gratification of our pride and lusts, we are happy; but these are our enemies, and the way of peace is not to indulge, but to war against them determinately; it is a great help toward conquering, when we know who are our enemies; and we must know too, that God is on our side,—he desires that we gain the victory, and will give us strength to be more than conquerors, through him that loved us. Hardness is that which is disagreeable to us: Oh, what hardships a good soldier has to undergo to gain an earthly crown, while we labour for an eternal, incorruptible reward; and, strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus! we must make sacrifices for it.

4. Under the type of a soldier, he here explains our situation as Christians. A soldier is separated from his friends and all worldly occupations, to give his whole time and care to the warfare; not that he loses his friends or property, but he must not abuse them, but devote himself to his occupation as a soldier: so a Christian, living *in* the world, yet not *of* the world; his life a conflict, a struggle; when do we get entangled in this life? when this world and its concerns have the chief place in our hearts; when our affections are set on things below, when our souls are glued to this world, when even its troubles, its cares and anxieties unduly burden us, and we forget to repose on His care and love, who careth for us; or indeed we may get entangled with our sins if we do not cast ourselves upon him entirely. Go abroad and see how men are entangled with the concerns of this life, like the flies which men entangle by placing a sticky sweet to attract them, and they come and sip the sweet but cannot get away, and are unable to soar upward, and thus are destroyed: let us know and believe this, that our lusts *are* our enemies, and that our only safety is in continual warfare. "*That he may please him*," &c.; that is, that we may please Christ. I hope the aim of our hearts is to please him. We follow him to certain victory; nothing else is in his heart than

that ; the whole earth shall be blessed with his love,—he means to conquer *all*, and that *for us*. Nelson used to say to his Officers before a battle,—'A Peerage, or Westminster Abbey :' not a peerage awaits us, but a glorious *kingdom ;* the saints shall be kings and priests ; remember, all the promises in the Revelation are to him that overcometh, and the strength for it is in the first verse,—"strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

5. The idea here is taken from the Grecian games, where they ran, and wrestled, and strove for a laurel crown, and were obliged very minutely to observe the rules laid down. We may observe how much oftener the prize is held out to be obtained, than the curse to be escaped, in the Bible. We may strive very hard, but all may be useless, unless we strive lawfully ; look at Paul before his conversion, exceedingly mad against the Church ; very zealous, vehement, ardent for God ; but ignorant, he strove unlawfully ; see him after conversion, patient, persevering, toiling, labouring, he was striving lawfully. Christ must be the end of our striving : not to establish our own righteousness, but to attain a meek, loving, Christian-like spirit,—submitting to the righteousness of God.

6. This may be taken in two senses. "*The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits,*" and 'the husbandman that *laboureth* first, must be partaker of fruit ;' it will be best illustrated in the case of domestics in a family, who, in labouring, first partake of the daily nourishment, and afterwards at a certain season, receive their wages.

7. Here Calvinism and Arminianism shake hands, as in that, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure." This I may say to each of you, consider what I say ; I hope you do not let family instruction pass without after-reflection ; but at the same time this will be of no use, if you do not apply to the Lord for "*understanding in all things* ;" the whole fulness of truth is our inheritance, every portion of it is for our use.

8. What a remarkable chain of blessings begins in this verse—commencing with the incarnation of our Lord, till it arrives at the eternal glory of his completed church; well may he say "*remember*." "Jesus Christ," the Divine and Anointed Saviour of his people, "*of the seed of David*;" here is brought in, his human nature, and the future restoration of Israel—his royal kingdom over them, inherited from his father David, Luke i. 32, 33. "*Was raised from the dead*." He not only stooped to human nature, but also to suffering and death; but when all hopes through him appeared to be extinguished, he was raised to glory and immortality. Now this is of the utmost importance to remember, because, if Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins, but if he rose, we rose in him, and now our poor guilty human nature, which merited the wrath of God, is presented before him, spotless and acceptable in his sight, coming to God in the name of Jesus. All things are now ours for time and for eternity; on Christ we must feed all the day long, and on our acceptableness in the sight of God through him. Paul says, "To me to live is Christ." "*According to my gospel*." Every believer may say that: have *we* taken home to ourselves that glorious gospel, which is for God's family at large.

9. The trying part of this is, "*I suffer trouble, as an evil doer*," he who was so exerting himself to do good. But here we see the blindness of the world: they call him a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, turning the world upside down; they hated his Master, and there is a parallel between the sufferings of Christ and his people. Then comes the Christian's comfort, "*but the word of the Lord is not bound*."

10. "*Therefore*," &c. Paul knowing that the Lord had among the Gentiles a people to be saved among his elect, endured his bonds for their sakes; but why should he be so anxious for their salvation? Oh, know you not that every convert would be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ: think of the crown Abraham the father

of the faithful will have in that day, and remember, the true riches is to win souls to Christ.

11. He prefixes the same stamp to that truth in 1 Tim. i. 15, of Jesus coming to save sinners, and in Titus iii. 8. It seems here as if it were added, because of our great unbelief, and walking by sight and sense, and not by faith, "*If we be dead with him.*" There are two kinds of death with him; that by which as in Adam, one head of the human race, all sinned and thus died; so in Christ, another head of the human race, all died, and paid in him the full penalty and atonement for sin, so that all sin was punished in him, and we may say, I know that he took away my sin, and not one will ever be charged to me; then receiving these glad tidings, by a true and simple belief or faith in the other death of sanctification, begins dying to sin, becoming conformable to his death, seeing sin to be the greatest abomination, resisting our corrupt nature, groaning under the burden of it; this is dying "*with him;*" if we thus die, we shall also live with him; we shall be partakers in his resurrection.

12, 13. "*If we suffer.*" Mark, it is not put, if we suffer with him. A poor child of God might say, I am not suffering *with* him; so our God, in his kindness and love, says, "*If we suffer, we shall reign,*" if we follow him here, in a course not of pomp and outward show, but self-sacrifice for the good of others, then we shall reign. See what Paul says to the Corinthians: "Know ye not we shall judge angels?" The saints shall judge the world. See too that striking prediction, vii. 18, 27. This glory begins now in our spiritual life and happiness; but all our happiness here as Christians is but the preparation for that at present hidden and veiled, but soon outward and visible, glory, which awaits those who now suffer and die with him. Then comes the contrast to suffering with even denying him, which means to contradict him in any way; if he wills one line of action, and we, in self-wisdom and self-conceit, choose another; if we bow down to earthly aid and visible things, and forget Him who is invisible; what

more just, than that he should, when what is now invisible is then surpassingly glorious, deny us? "*If we believe not*," in contrast to being dead; for faith is spiritual life, and unbelief is spiritual death. If he be faithful to his promises, he will also be to his threatenings. Most important is it to consider the threatenings. You see it is put in a double form: "*he abideth faithful, and he cannot deny himself*." He who is the truth itself can never depart from the truth.

15. How solemn is this charge! It is still more strikingly put in the fourth chapter of this epistle and the first verse. I will tell you what are *words to no profit*—words that exalt man, and exalt not the Lord Jesus Christ.

14. "*Study*," &c. Oh! that this were our grand aim; but we are so anxious to be thought much of by man, and to gain the praise of man, which is of very little moment indeed, compared with approving ourselves to God, and ever thinking in the midst of our work, "will this please God?" "*A workman*," not a loiterer, but giving ourselves entirely to our work; a labourer for Christ, "*that needeth not to be ashamed*." All work will not bear inspection, but if we study to please God, we shall not ultimately be ashamed in the day of Christ. "*Rightly dividing*," &c. Different classes of Christians require different classes of truth to heal their diseases. Antinomians require the pure and holy law. Legalists require the grace of the gospel. Calvinists require to see the largeness and fulness of God's love.

16. A most important truth—for what begins in a *true*, though ignorant *zeal*, may become babblings; these babblings may become profane, departing from God's truth; then *vain* or empty; then they will *increase*, and then unto more *ungodliness*, or irreverence, at the purity and majesty of the word of God.

17. Hymeneus and Alexander had fallen into this error; they built upon this text, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

18. The error that the only resurrection we have to look for, is the spiritual resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins ;—this, my dear family, is why partial truth is so dangerous, such now as *particular redemption.* I believe God gave his Son, with a special reference to his elect ; but we must not limit, on this account, the simple and plain word, which says, "He gave his Son a ransom for *all.*" Satan contrives to gain access to the mind of a child of God, by magnifying a partial truth, and thus shutting out the whole truth, and building up human systems, instead of God's word.

19. There can be no doubt what the foundation means—"Other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, *Christ Jesus*"—"upon *him* were built the apostles and prophets"—and on him each believer is built as a lively stone ; the grand point is *to be on the rock* ; important indeed, it is, to build on the rock, gold, and silver, and not wood, hay, and stubble, but yet those who are *on the rock* are safe. The eastern seals were accustomed to have inscriptions written upon them. My seal, which was made at Jerusalem, has this inscription, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem"—so *this* is as a seal ; on one side, *the grace given to a Christian,* on the other, *the holiness which shall follow.* "*The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" Believers were known to the Lord before the foundation of theworld, each individual, and all their circumstances ;—the feeling in the Christian's mind, is, Oh ! let me flee from sin, it is my worst enemy, it dishonours my Saviour, sin crucified my Redeemer.

20. "The church of God" has distinct meanings—it is an outward and visible church, composed of all professing Christians, and an inward and spiritual church, known only to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In this figure of the vessels of a house, he is speaking of the outward church, as our Saviour does, when he says, in John xv., "Every branch that beareth not fruit *he taketh away.*" Here Christians are compared *to what is precious ;*—jewels,

the light of the world, the salt of the earth, sons and daughters ;—this is our Saviour's love, as a mother delights to call her children endearing names. The gold and silver becomes a vessel, by purging from dross in the furnace, and hammering and beating by the workman ; nay, the more beautiful and refined the vessel is afterward to be, the more blows it will previously have ; so our sorrows are all needful for our future glory. But in the church of Christ, there are vessels to dishonour, of wood, and earth, not designed for the master, but to carry refuse out of the house, and to be thrown away, when they have done their work.

21. "*If a man*," &c. *These* refer, I suppose, to verses 14—16 and 23 ; to purge himself from these, he must put away pride, and highmindedness, self-wisdom, and self-will,—must come to the purging blood of Christ, and feel his own emptiness and nothingness, putting on meekness and patience. "*Ye shall be a vessel unto honour.*" "Them that honour me, I will honour ;" the way to honour is to serve Christ. "*Sanctified*," cleansed and purified ; "*meet for the Master's use.*" Christ will use him in his service, and employ him for his glory. "*Prepared for every good work.*" The mercy shown to a Christian, is for no selfish end ; mark the term "*vessel*,"—to bear mercy to all around. We should view *every* thing as a Sacrament ; not merely the bread and wine at the Lord's table. You see here our very dishes are "outward and visible signs, of an inward and spiritual grace, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof :" the Bible would raise us to this, and I suppose, the great glory of the Millennial kingdom will be, that we shall live, as it were, in a sacramental atmosphere, every thing redeemed from evil, and consecrated to the service of our Redeemer.

22. There are many lusts which especially tempt the young, such as vanity, levity, loving pleasure and earthly things more than God, self-sufficiency, impurity, too much delight in vain company,—now these things we are told to flee ; he does not mean by "*youthful lusts*," cheerfulness,

or the enjoyments God, in His love and Providence, gives us, or earnest pursuit of knowledge, and our daily occupations; but pride and highmindedness, or insubordination. Why does God tell us to flee these youthful lusts? because he knows that, under the pretence of making ushappy, they will sow for us the seeds of misery now, and eternal misery hereafter. He loves us too well to allow us to enter into them, just as a parent loving a child will not allow him to have all holiday, but says,—'No, you must spend much of the day in study, that you may be fitted for usefulness afterwards;' so our God keeps us in discipline now, that we may be fitted for greater glory hereafter. "*But follow*,"—how striking the contrast: on the one hand "*Flee youthful lusts.*" On the other, "*Follow righteousness.*" The reason is, our hearts are naturally induced to *follow our lusts*, and to *flee from righteousness*, so all the energies of our souls must be directed to fleeing what appears to us to be right, and following what appears strict and severe. What is righteousness? following, not what appears to us to be right, but what God tells us is right; and he has made this very easy, by the gift of his Son to atone for our past guilt, and of his Spirit to overcome our corruptions. "*Follow faith.*" Observe, we must *follow* faith, it will not drop from the skies into our mouths; it must be followed in the ordinances of God, by prayer, reading the word, going to the Lord's table. Then comes "*charity.*" "Faith worketh by love." And then "peace," "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." But Satan has prevailed much to divide the church; how many sects and divisions are there among Christians! Those actuated by a vehement party spirit, endeavouring to exalt themselves, and not their Lord, we cannot so easily live in peace with; but our aim must be, to do so with those "who call on the Lord out of a pure mind."

23. "*But foolish.*" &. We think them very wise, but God calls them foolish and unlearned. A great deal of the divisions which have arisen among Christians, have been from these foolish and unlearned questions. We ought to

ask questions, when we are ignorant, of those that can teach us, and to ask with modesty and humility; but where we ask from vanity, it is to be avoided, for vanity will ask the question, and vanity will keep up strife about it.

24. "*The servants.*" &c. The more exact translation is, "must not *fight.*" The Lord will not have His servants quarrelsome and disputing people. "*But must be gentle;*" this gentleness not at all hindering firmness; as we see in our Saviour, driving them out of the temple, with a whip of small cords, but power is only to be used as far as God gives it, that we may discharge our duty to Him, and then all gentleness to be shown to *all men.* That word *all* is very observable, "*apt to teach.*" There is a great deal in this, knowing how to improve passing events, for the good of those around us. "*Patient*"—the more exact meaning is *forbearing* when others *would* strive, not striving again with them.

25. Here he teaches us what to do, when others who have not the same insight into divine truth, and who are living far off from God, would oppose themselves; not to show pride and highmindedness, supposing we are better than they, but with meekness—the law of the Bible is the law of *love*—God is love—what a blessing is it, that the Lord who rules heaven and earth, gives it as his chief command, that we should love—love him supremely, and love all our fellow-men with real affection,—meekly instructing them, as feeling we ourselves are blind, dark, and still very ignorant of Divine truth, very far from its fulness; as feeling we have nothing we have not received, and are entirely dependent upon God—this is the spirit in which to instruct; for a highminded, vain spirit raises directly all the evil affections of a man's heart,—his pride fights, his self-wisdom fights, his self-will fights, all fight against it; —but nothing can resist meekness and love. "*Repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*" two things are requisite; first, repentance, which in the Bible means a changed mind, as to spiritual things;—now, instead of viewing God to be

our enemy, viewing him to be our friend : instead of delighting in sin, seeing it to be our misery—this repentance arises from two things, a view of God's truth, and the work of God's Spirit in our hearts,—the acknowledging of the truth,—the confession of the truth with our lips, in our lives,—being wholly influenced by it ; there is an alarming, quickening, stirring word "*peradventure ;*" what! may I lose it by neglecting the truth ? if I do not repent, may I perish ? Yes, you may indeed, through the stubbornness of sin in your heart.

26. "*That they may recover themselves,*" &c. Look at those snares, one by one, Eph. ii. 2, 3. And now, see the Christian, who is recovered from these, and who is the only genuine freeman : as far as he is a true Christian, he is free ; and let our aim be first to *gain* repentance ourselves, and then in meekness to instruct them that oppose themselves.

CHAPTER III.

1. THIS is a striking prophecy of what is taking place in our own day, under our own eye ;—my growing conviction has been for many years, that these are the very times in which we live. Mark the words, "*this know :*"—some say, "this you had better not know ; do not study prophecy, there are so many opinions, and men run into such extravagancies ;" but the Holy Spirit to meet this, says —"*this know*"—not indeed to the exclusion of other truth, but as a thing whereunto we do well to take heed especially. If you compare this expression, "the last days," with 1 Tim. iv. 1. you will see that this is a later period—it is said, *last* instead of *later days ;* instead of *times :*—what a solemn thought it is, that we are in the last few remaining days, before the coming of the Lord, and the last judgment ; and the hour-glass is as it were just running out, and all is preparing for the great change ;—may it duly affect our hearts : "*Perilous times,*" days of peril

to the temporal and eternal happiness of men, when every thing established is shaking, to a prodigious extent:—this is now realized, every where men are let loose, and going astray, some to infidelity, some to popery, some to worldliness; nothing outward indeed is perilous, but what is caused by sin; the great peril is in our own evil hearts, the root of all the peril is, you see, traced to the sins which follow.

2. "*Men shall be lovers of their own selves;*"—there is a proper self-love, which is made the standard of love to others; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"—but what is here meant, is that inordinate self-love, which leads us to prefer self to the glory of God; a proper self-love seeks in God's own appointed way, and according to God's will, its interest and happiness;—an inordinate self-love breaks family ties, breaks patriotic ties, and leaves man an isolated being, living only for himself:—What can cure this? only the gospel,—when our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, and full of gratitude to him, we seek not our own, but his, and the good of those around us, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. God looks down from heaven, and this is the character he gives of men in these times; men are calling them, "the enlightened times"—but God looks down, and gives this humbling and lowering view; this does not preclude piety growing and increasing; pious men will be growing more decidedly devoted to God, and the wicked more daringly wicked; till the great separation comes; as in the case of Lot from Sodom, or the Christians escaping to Pella, while the Jews were destroyed in Jerusalem; so it will be when our Saviour returns, and the saints are translated, while the wicked are left in the great tribulation. "*Covetous*" this is the character very much of men now. The testimony of Mr. Close was striking,—'that several apprentices had been to him, and told him, "They could not continue in their business, for they were telling lies all the day long, for the sake of money-getting."' "*Boasters*"—quite another feature of men now;—because it has pleased God, that there are great improvements in arts and sciences

(in fulfilment indeed of another prophecy, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,") men boast of their superiority; here, we see God's mind upon the men of this time,—"*proud*," over past ages, proud toward their inferiors,—"*blasphemers:*"—blasphemers, against God, even the God of light and love, as I saw when obliged to read the paper of the Socialists: you know what Voltaire's watch-word was,—'Crush the wretch' meaning our Saviour and Christianity. "*Disobedient to parents;*" among Christians, family union and love is graciously much preserved, but when travelling in the north, I saw what a sin of the present day this is. "*Unthankful*," without gratitude to God, or gracious feelings towards him. "*Unholy;*" not devoted to God, transgressing against their baptismal vow; men make the mistake of supposing they may live in the world as their fathers did; that all things will continue as they have done, but I believe we live in very remarkable times, just before the great change of the coming of the Lord, and the translation of his saints, and the last judgments upon the wicked.

3. "*Without natural affection.*" Now as an instance, look at the factory system,—parents supporting themselves by the toil of their little children; or look on the other hand at the workhouses, and see the parents driven into *these*, instead of being supported by their children:—"*trucebreakers*," tracing it from its commencement to the breaking of the baptismal vow, yet, in a variety of other ways this is realized:—"*false accusers;*" the word in the margin is "diabolic;" the very character of Satan is that of a malignant false-accuser; three or four of the principal radical newspapers are fully realizing this description:—"*incontinent*;" without self-denial, giving the rein to their lusts;—see how the Socialists verify this, by wanting to do away with marriage.—"*Fierce*," Lord Ashley told me it was quite affecting to see the fierceness of some party leaders.—"*Despisers of those that are good;*" so we see in the midst of all this evil, there are those that *are* good, and

oh! the contempt and ridicule which they excite, among the children of the world.

4. "*Traitors,*" the whole spirit of this day is to overturn governments and subvert authorities; "*heady, high-minded,*"—the people governing; on the French coin, "sovereign of France, by the grace of God" is struck out, and in its stead is put "by the will of the people;" "*lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.*" Let us take a single instance, the money paid for ardent spirits in these kingdoms, is much more than the voluntary contributions of money for spiritual things. Even that for tobacco and snuff is more; any indulgence and luxury almost costs more than the things of God. Now I have gone through these very cursorily, but you may see how strikingly descriptive they are of these times; they may teach us how near we are to the coming of our Lord, and how we ought to live prepared for that great event; to "come out, and be separate" from the evil around us, to long for the conversion of those around us, to regard them, not with an high-minded spirit; supposing ourselves better than they, but labouring for their conversion, while the day of grace is prolonged.

5. "*Having a form of godliness;*" you see all these characters, though so awfully wicked, throw the flimsy veil of the form, over their wickedness. Satan cannot get on without assuming a veil of godliness; this may comfort us, in the assurance that finally he shall be unmasked, and driven from our world. The chartist preachers are an example of this; the Neologians are another example, but a very painful instance is that of the Political Dissenters, who, under a show of godliness, join radicals and infidels. I am struck with the expression, "*godliness,*" not merely religion, but reverence for God,—"*godliness;*" what a lesson this is for ourselves:—attending the house of God, an outside show is not enough; what then is the power of godliness? look at St. Paul, before conversion; moved only by the form, he persecuted the church; but when he obtained the power, what a total change, what meekness,

patience, what earnestness, to spread the gospel; oh, godliness is a powerful thing, pervading all the thoughts and words of the Christian, who, laying aside selfishness, worldliness, and deceit; the characteristics of the mere form, learns to bring God into everything. "*From such turn away;*" how important is the choice of companions; here we are directed to turn away from the mere formalist, especially, I suppose, referring to such characters as he had mentioned before.

6. Here we see the effect such characters have upon the females, and it is very painful to reflect how in these perilous times, seduced by the appearance of good, the female sex has fallen, and lent its power to what is evil; we see it in the French revolution. "*Creep into houses,*" it reminds one of the serpent, creeping in and insinuating himself into Eve's good graces, and then injecting the poison into her soul; now what is the remedy? To acquire divine knowledge, to lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and to mortify every lust.

7. An awful picture this, of those who, laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts, though "*ever learning, are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" God *wills* that they should come to the knowledge of the truth, see 1 Tim. ii. 4. Let us remember, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God;" obedience is the path to religious knowledge, especially we gain knowledge by searching the Scriptures with prayer.

8. Jannes and Jambres were the Egyptian Magicians who withstood Moses; their names are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but they are in the New, from which we may learn, that, though the lamp of the wicked shall go out in darkness, their evils are not forgotten; there shall be a resurrection of the unjust, when the names of sinners shall be brought into life from the darkness of past ages, ere they sink for ever into the pit of destruction. Three things are mentioned concerning them, all closely connected; they resist the truth, the root of which resistance

is from their corrupt minds; and then, despising truth, they become "*reprobate concerning the faith.*" For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

9. He had been speaking about the Egyptian magicians, Jannes and Jambres, and saying, that the men who should appear in the last days, like them should resist the truth, being men of corrupt minds, &c. Now from this passage and from others which are quite plain, I gather that in these last days, on which we are entering, men, assisted by the devil, shall have power to work miracles quite beyond human skill, see for instance, Matt. xxiv. 24. 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. Rev. xiii. 13, 14. Now the Christian guarded by the light of prophecy, and seeing that the tendency of these miracles is to lead *from* God, not *to* God, and to overthrow the truth of his word, will be preserved from the strong delusion, which, to bring out the wickedness of the wicked, God will permit Antichrist, of whom we see the beginning already in the Socialists and Chartists, to exercise; indeed we already see the beginning of these things in the Egyptian magicians, and in various ways this seems to be creeping on. Well, it shall go to a certain length, but no further; then by the immediate interference of God, it shall be stopt, and shall meet with the end of all iniquity, the manifestation of its folly:—what! folly to work miracles? yes, this scripture stamps it as folly.

10. The Bible always puts things in strong contrast: after the fearful description we have just had, Paul turns to Christian character and conduct; mark first, doctrine, *then* manner of life; neither without the other;—"*purpose*," aim and bent of my mind,—"*long-suffering*," he had to suffer long for doing good. How all this is opposed, in its spirit of self-sacrifice, to the 2nd and 3rd verses;—let us see that "*the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*," and, that "*the way of transgressors is hard.*"

11. The persecution of God's children, and the increase of wickedness, is the state of the world, and will be, till the Lord come. Who would not long for that blessed time, which shall make such a glorious change, when wickedness shall be banished from our earth, and the saints be

triumphant? The account of Paul's trial at Antioch, we have, in Acts xiii. 45, 50: at Iconium, Acts xiv. 2, 5: at Lystra, the 19th verse of the same chapter; but the Lord delivered him out of them all; now mark the nature of the deliverance. Paul had to endure the suffering, to feel the weight and agony of the stones at Lystra. Religion does not insure us against heavy afflictions, but it does assure to us a full and final deliverance, nay now, "*our light affliction worketh for us*," &c. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

12. Owing to our Christian government and laws, we are much protected from what we should otherwise endure; but yet in a measure, as we "*live godly in Christ Jesus, we shall suffer persecution*" of bitter contempt, and scorn, and the laughter, and continual threatenings and dislike of a world, which feels itself reproved by our holy walk and conduct;—the mode of expression is remarkable, not they that will live *morally*; men may do that with very little reproach; nor is it they that will live godly *simply*, a man may be an ascetic, much devoted to the form of religion, and instead of persecution, gain admiration, as a great saint; but to *live godly in Christ Jesus*, to glory in him alone, and in his free salvation,—to rejoice in a crucified Redeemer, exalting him, and acknowledging our utter depravity, on the one hand, and yet to join with this, the strictness of a godly life on the other, is what the world cannot bear; for it strikes at their pride and self-righteousness on one side, and at the indulgence of their carnal lusts on the other. Mark the determination of the expression, *they that will live*, &c., come what will or what may. Now let us be willing to take up this cross, knowing that it is the way to everlasting glory. What is our Saviour's crown in heaven? is it the myriads of angels, with whom he is surrounded? is it the throne of majesty, on which he sits? No; what then! *it is his death*, "Worthy is the Lamb *that was slain*, to receive power and glory." &c. Rev. v. 12. So shall we come to our glory, remembering what our Saviour says, Matt. v. 11, 12.

13. The awful nature of sin is, that it is a growing evil; as intoxication increases upon a drunkard, till it ends in

ruin, we see rarely, evil men who seduce others, converted ; persecutors we hear of, as Paul himself, or wicked men simply, but *seducers* implies a subtilty, insidiousness, and cunning which generally ends in destruction. "*Deceiving*" others, leading them astray from the right path, "*and being deceived.*" Why, imagine a poor creature of a day, supposing he can outwit God, and safely rebel against the Maker of Heaven and Earth !

14. We find the usual Bible plan of putting things in contrast carried on here. If we turn from the dark and painful picture we have left, and enquire how we may escape all its evils, we find the answer in this verse.—There are three steps in it ;—1st. *learning*, God requires us first to submit to be learning, to receive on the trust of others, to learn by a diligent prayerful study and search ; then comes *assurance*, and, oh ! what blessed assurance is gained that the Bible is the word of God, the same kind of assurance that we have, with regard to the light and warmth of the Sun : we know it, because we *feel* and *see* it ; so feeling the warming beams of God's love which shine in the Bible, and viewing its holiness, righteousness, purity, and goodness, I become entirely convinced of its Divine origin, and know that Heaven and Earth may pass away, but not one jot or one tittle of the word of God ; on *that* my soul may firmly rest : but there is another step, we have *to continue in them.* Now this direction comes because of the remains of our fallen and corrupt nature, which requires a constant and fresh supply of God's truth, daily drawn from his word. "*Knowing of whom.*" &c. Here Paul alludes to what he had mentioned before, 2 Tim. i. 5. My family have parents who know and love the truth ; oh, that they may continue in the things they have learned.

15. His mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois, had trained him up in the knowledge of the Bible ; and oh ! my family, what an unspeakable mercy it is to be trained up in the ways of the Lord. Look now at the nations of the earth. A New Zealander is trained up to be a Cannibal, a Chinese to be a worshipper of Foo and Budhoo, a

Hindoo to worship Vishnu, a Mahometan to follow Mahomet, a Papist to worship the Virgin Mary, while we, among all the millions who dwell upon the face of the earth, instead of being brought up to live in error, are instructed in the pure truth of God's holy word. "*Thou hast known*," known by *reading, hearing, getting off by heart, and explanation.* "*The holy scriptures.*" The word scripture is a Latin word, meaning writing. These are emphatically the *holy* writings, compiled under a long succession of ages; but all, having God for their Divine Author, compared with which all other books are as the light of a farthing candle, when compared with the noon-day sun. Peter gives a testimony to Paul's writings, "2 Peter iii. 16. "*Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.*" This verse is a thunderbolt against that Oxford heresy, that has arisen lately, supposing that tradition is clearer than the Bible, and needed to make the Bible complete. Salvation does not merely include escaping hell, and gaining heaven; heaven would be *no heaven* to me, if I were to take my pride, and self-wisdom, and self-will with me there; the word *sanctifies* as well as *saves.* John xvii. 17. See the description of heavenly wisdom, James iii. 17.; but all is through faith in the blood and merits of Jesus. I may search the Scriptures for ever, and without being led by them to trust in Jesus, all will be of no avail; but blessed be God, the Scriptures are so full of Christ, that if I search them with a view to finding my Saviour, and gaining faith in him, I shall indeed be made wise unto salvation.

16. What a sublime eulogy is this on the Bible, one might have thought, after saying, It is able to make you wise unto salvation, he had gone to the extent of what he had to say; but here he gives first a full testimony to its Divine "*inspiration*," then shows its various kinds of profitableness, and that it is "*able throughly to furnish us unto all good works.*" The idea of inspiration is that of *breathing in*, the Holy Ghost himself directing what to insert, and what to omit; now this puts quite an end to all cavils as to the Apostles' knowing beforehand what they

wrote, or not knowing. We find the sacred writers of the Old Testament inspired to write what they could not fully understand. Thus David prays, "Open mine eyes to behold wonderful things out of thy law." Oh! my family, of all wonders we find the greatest in the word of God; there are wonders in creation, deep and unsearchable things beyond our comprehension; there are wonders in providence, but yet greater wonders in the inspired volume; therefore the sacred writer says, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Now this is what the worldling cannot discern, and he reads the Bible as a task, or to satisfy conscience. "*And is profitable.*" There is a real and unspeakable profit in the word of God;—a man eats his food to profit his body, he goes forth to his labour, for in it there is profit; it makes him thrive in the world; in reading history, there is profit, it opens our mind to what the world *has* been; in studying science, there is profit, it multiplies our comforts. What shall we say then, of the far superior profit of reading the word of God? profit for body, profit for soul, profit for time, profit for eternity, profit for our family, profit for escaping hell, profit for gaining heaven: Oh! who can tell the profit of a diligent prayerful study of the word of God! "*For doctrine*," as our Collect beautifully expresses it. "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written *for our learning*," &c. Well, I will pause here; may what you have heard increase your reverence for and love of the Bible. "*For reproof.*" By the law is the conviction of sin, for "I had not known sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The Bible is a most humbling book, teaching by its examples of holy men, *our defects*;—shewing in its examples of evil men, our corresponding sin. A straight rule shews the crookedness of a crooked line. Thus the Bible discovers our guilt; most needful is such an unfailing guide, for conscience soon becomes seared, and the opinions of the world are so varied, there would be no sense of guilt without this infallible test. "*For correction.*" Blessed be God, the Bible is a grand corrective to what is

evil. Now behold the cruelty of those lands, where the Bible is wholly unknown ; their darkness and miseries ; such as the Chinese, Hindoos, Africans, New Zealanders, the more refined idolatry in the worship of saints and images, where it is as a system kept from the people, and see again the difference, where it is freely circulated, and you see the corrective power of evil there is in it. "*Instruction in righteousness.*" Look at the lovely and holy tempers in which a Christian is there instructed, Matt. v. Gal. v. 22. the instruction as to relative duties, 1 Peter iii.

17. The end of all that has gone before is now brought out. "*Man of God.*" Often he is called a *child* of God, but now has attained maturity. Eph. iv. 13. Our God in his love designs nothing less than our perfection. Phil. iii. 12. We are now in a school, as it were ; taught by the word of God, disciplined by Him, from whence we shall issue perfect, like God, one with Him. "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake up after thy likeness." "*Thoroughly furnished,*" &c. The Bible being the grand energising motive to all good works.

CHAPTER IV.

What a solemn charge is this ; and when we remember *who* gave it ; the first Apostle of the Gentiles ;—*when* he gave it—just before his martyrdom ; and *to whom* he gave it ? to his own beloved son in the faith, his companion and fellow-labourer ;—we may be sure it is most important and most instructive. "*Before God,*" in his immediate presence, "*and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Many important and instructive thoughts are brought out here. The Divinity of the Lord in his Omnipresence ; the great watchfulness and care he has over his ministers ; they are the stars in his right hand. He says to them, "*I know thy works.*" I want you to notice the distinction between the quick and the dead ; it is brought before us in other places, Acts x.

42. Romans xiv. 9, 10. First, at the appearance of the Lord, the *living* saints shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the *living* wicked,—awful thought, punished immediately, and sent in vast masses to eternal ruin, and the second death. Then as to the *dead;* the dead *saints*, at the coming of the Lord, shall be raised and translated with the living saints, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, and the *wicked* dead not raised till the end of the millennium, when the state of every human being shall be finally decided. Rev. xix. 12. Indeed the whole of the xixth and xxth chapters of Revelation are an unfolding of the simple truths told us here. Mark the order,—first, his appearing, *then* his kingdom; not as some have supposed, his coming after the millennium. Two or three passages will make this clear to you: Dan. vii. 13, the coming, verse 14, the kingdom; Matt. xxv. 31, the coming, verse 34, the kingdom; Rev. xix. 11, the coming, xx. 4, the kingdom. My dear family, we have no reason to suppose any length of time will intervene between us and the coming of our Lord; most probably it will take place in our life-time, and we shall, with our own eyes see, "the heavens open, and the Son of Man come in his glory." True, the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and the great tribulation will come before, but they may, and probably will, take up a very few years. Well then may the directions follow, "*Preach the word*," &c., referring primarily to ministers, but also to *all*, for we must *all* give an account of ourselves to God. Let this solemn thought influence us every day; and not only the *terror* should influence us, but the kingdom too,—the glory to be assigned. "Behold! your God shall come with vengeance, even God, with a recompense; he will come and *save you*; for this end the gospel is revealed, that we may have boldness before him at his coming. Oh! this blessed confidence once attained through a living faith in the blood of Jesus, it will raise us above all earthly fear; for what is every other fear compared with that great day. Let our position ever be, that of the aspiration;—"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

2. The idea is that of a herald in the Divine name and Divine authority, telling the mind and will of God, "*the word;*" *the* word emphatically amongst the thousands of other words spoken by men every day, this word comprising the whole Bible, and as Christ is the sum of the Bible, so he has this title, "the Word of God." John i. 1. "*Be instant in season and out of season.*" I, as your minister, have more public duties directly "*in season*;" on the sabbath, in the week day, in family instruction, in visiting the sick; but there are other opportunities to be improved, more as it were "*out of season;*" such as family intercourse, on a journey &c. The grand point for us all is to have the heart so full of these things, that they should be continually bursting from us even though not in the regularly appointed season of instruction, for this concerns us all. *Exhort one another* &c; "*reprove*" or convince of what is wrong, then if they refuse to hear; "*rebuke;*" then "*exhort;*" charge with all authority, yet with all "*long-suffering;*" patiently persevering amid all difficulties "*and teaching.*"

3. Now mark, *when* "*the time comes, when men will not endure sound doctrine;*" then the servant of God must be found faithful, teaching, and exhorting, it was so in the Greek churches; and Chrysostom and other faithful ministers were persecuted and rejected for their plain and simple declaration of God's truth; "*but shall heap up to themselves teachers,*" &c. very striking is this description, not content with one, seeking after many, "*having itching ears.*"

4. The end of all this is very awful: "*they are turned away from the truth to fables;*" the fables of the Greek church quite answer this description.

5. He has been speaking of the fables, to which those forsaking the truth have turned, and then begins to show his beloved Son Timothy how to escape; "*But watch thou in all things*;" these directions carry a great weight; when we remember, it was now just before his martyrdom. I suppose he had been before Nero, and was expecting his end of glory, and the reward of his sufferings. Timothy

was comparatively young, and for the young, perhaps, this direction is especially suitable, for besides watchfulness against ungodliness, and worldliness, which are openly evil; Satan may be transformed into an angel of light, and we may be deluded by an appearance of good. Now there are two great points to be attended to, to escape these more subtle devices of Satan. 1st. "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my paths;" it reveals the truth to us; then, *fervent prayer*, as the key which opens the Bible to us—"*endure afflictions.*" Paul, though he so loved Timothy, yet gives him this advice—to bear present pain, it is what we do in earthly things; in food we deny ourselves, and are temperate, for the health of our body; in getting the reward of labour, we first submit to the toil; so it is with the soul, we must labour in fervent prayer, patient reading of the Scriptures, mortification of our lusts. My dear family, I have always set this before you, "if we would reign, we must suffer with him." But what besides is set before us, oh, we are striving for a crown; the lake of fire is before us to be escaped; the eternal weight of glory is to be attained. "*Do the work of an Evangelist;*" sweet title, one who bears the gospel,—the glad tidings; my dear family, God has opened our eyes, has translated us from darkness into light, oh, let us tell this man, tell that man, tell all about us, "I have good news for you; God loves poor sinners, he pardons them freely, through the blood of his Son, he will give them eternal life; oh, seek to know and to love the Lord Jesus; "*make full proof of thy ministry,*" what is our ministry? Our dear Saviour addresses us, he says, "I have saved thee, and am preparing for thee eternal glory; now I want thee, in the way to thy glory, to serve me here:" "How, oh Lord, shall I serve thee?" "Try to diffuse thy happiness; I honour thee in making thee my instrument to save others; bring others with thee to glory, to be with thee as thy crowns of joy, and to share my love with thee through eternity:" Oh, that we may all answer, "Here am I, Lord Jesu, use me for thy service, and thy glory."

6. Observe the connection between the last verse and this. I am now going, the standard of the cross is falling from my hands, but take *thou* it up, watch thou in all things, it is another way of putting, "Be ye therefore followers of me as I am of Christ;" every martyr, every saint who leaves us to enter into his rest, should have to us an animating voice, "Press forward." "I am now ready to be offered," to be poured out as a full and entire sacrifice; the aspect with which he regards death in this verse is twofold; in *this* clause, as a penalty brought into the world by sin; in the *next* as a departure, a loosing from a world of sin and sorrow, and launching into an eternity of blessedness. There is also in these verses a double aspect of his glory,—one, the glory of his departure, "I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," another yet higher degree of glory, in the appearing of the Lord. The Lord has ordained the time for our departure, the hour most suitable for us; whether it be before his coming or no, we may safely leave all in the hands of his wisdom and love.

7. There is an allusion here to the Isthmian games, and the wrestling and running exercised in them. "*I have fought the good fight,*" is the more exact idea; only one fight (even our spiritual warfare, and what is connected with it,) is truly good—all others are bad fights; now, my dear family, are we *contending?*—though the world says *no,* and the flesh says *no,* and the devil says *no,* depend upon it, if we are Christians there is a battle within, and a battle without every day. "*I have finished my course,*" read Heb. xii. 1. and you see the nature of the race; "now," might he say, "all is done, all is within my grasp; my sufferings are now over;" oh, how amply now was he compensated for all his trials and afflictions, his shipwreck, imprisonments, stripes, now all was over, and henceforth for ever the presence of Christ, the beatific vision, "the spirits of just men made perfect." Oh my family, would we have such an end, (the blessed gospel enabling us to look calmly upon death with all its terrors)

let us fight now, ever keeping the end in view. "*I have kept the faith :*" here he beautifully joins motive and conduct, principle and practice, he *fights*, and *runs*, but it is according *to the rule and line marked out by his Judge.* If we would fight the good fight, and finish the course, we must keep the faith, studying and loving our Bible, and seeing what the truth is.

8. "*Henceforth*," this is the transition-point, as if he had said,—'No more pain, no more curse, no more crying; "*henceforth*" I leave this conflicting world, and gain glory, eternal glory!' "*There is laid up for me*," this expression is often used, as in 1 Peter i. 4, "*reserved* in heaven," &c.; Colossians i. 5, "*laid up* for you in heaven;" John xiv. 2, "I go *to prepare* a place for you:" first, the Saviour gives us grace to prepare us for glory, then he prepares our glory for us; continually for each out-going of his grace in us, enlarging our eternal glory. My dear family, I want you to get hold of this great idea, of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Every act of love to Christ, every self-denial for him, every secret prayer; all our love to souls, all our conflicts, every effort for the good of others; forgotten as it may be by us, unknown as it may be to others, is yet laid up for us in heaven: "If we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "*For me*,"—the worldling "heapeth up riches, and he cannot tell who shall gather them." Would you have secure treasure for yourselves personally? Oh, follow these directions; watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your service to Christ, and this without any selfishness. In the expression, "*for me*," how beautifully he rises to the whole church in the end of the verse. So "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." "*A crown of righteousness;*" let us view some different aspects of this crown: 1 Peter v. 4, "A crown of glory;" Rev. ii. 10, "A crown of life;" Psalm ciii. 4, "A crown of loving-kindness, and tender mercies." Oh, what a beautiful crown is here! Our Queen Victoria's, costly and beautiful as it is, is as a tinselled bauble, com-

pared with this; but why does he specify a crown of *righteousness?* Here I am struck with the heavenly mind of the Apostle: the highest aim of a godly man is to be conformed to God; and here Paul thinks,—'I shall for ever drop the body of sin and death; no more lusting of the flesh against the spirit; I shall be for ever like God, holy as he is holy, pure as he is pure.' "*Crown of righteousness;*" *kings* and *priests.* Oh, how happy will our earth be when these royal priests reign over it. "*Which the Lord,*" our dear Master whom we have loved, to whom we have given our whole hearts. "*The righteous Judge,*" in the same sense, that Abraham says, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Paul knew the Lord, in his righteousness, would reward his faithful servants, not on the ground of merit, but seeing what the righteousness of Jesus had merited, and relying on his faithful promises. Now mark, the day of judgment is a day of righteous judgment; doubtless there is grace, infinite grace, in any poor sinner being accepted. But God will then be seen to be perfectly righteous in all his dealings; this should make us very careful; while we love the doctrines of grace, not be content with having them in our own head, we must bring them into daily practice. "*Shall give me;*" the word "*give*" denoting the freedom of the gift. "*In that day;*" how full the Apostles were of this idea! We may measure our growth in grace by this test, "How will this appear in the last day?" is that our continual thought in all we do? "*Not to me only;*" the grand aim of a worldly man is,—'I have this which no one else has,—I stand alone in this advantage or gain.' Oh! poor, wretched, fallen man, now look at grace.—'Oh, here is my comfort; it is not to me only,' says the believer in the sweet sense of happiness he enjoys in the happiness of others; 'I am not alone elected of God, there are multitudes of others with me to share eternal glory; there is not a shadow of reason for supposing our own happiness will be diminished; just the reverse; as the misery of those shut up in hell will be increased, the more get there;

so will the happiness of heaven be increased, the more there are to enjoy it.

"*But to all them that love his appearing:*" There are two kinds of love;—first, a love to Jesus, then to his appearing: love *to Jesus*, from a sense of the great kindness he has shewn to us; from a sense of our full redemption from all our sins in his blood; and not only for our redemption on the cross; but from knowing his daily work for us *now*, as our Shepherd, Prophet, Priest and King, our strength and comfort; then, when we find our hearts glow with love to Jesus, how can we but love his appearing? For though in comparison with other ways, the ways of Christ are now "ways of pleasantness, and his paths peace,"—yet this is the season of absence, of temptation, of the reign of sin, of walking by faith, and not by sight; of conflicts, of the allurements of an ensnaring world, of bearing about with us a body of sin and death; but at the appearing of the Lord Jesus we shall have a glorified body, free for ever from sin, gathered to the assembly of all the saints; and what is more than all, *the presence of Christ* for ever; "so shall we ever be with the Lord." I want to show you, my dear family, that this is the great hope and joy of the Church. Our God would have us view the judgment as a day of hope and glory, see Isaiah xxv. 9; Solomon's Song viii. 14; Rev. xxii. 20; and surely it should be so. Is it not grievous, when the Bride longs not for the return of the Bridegroom,—the wife for the husband; when we rejoice not in the expected coming of our dearest Friend and Saviour? Now let us see a great mystery in these verses;—we might think it quite right, that so eminent an Apostle as Paul,—one so entirely devoted to Christ—should be rewarded, and we might have expected him to go on, *Not to me only, but* to some other eminent saints,—to the martyrs;—but it is *to all;* and the "*Righteous Judge*" does this. You see the same thing in Rev. xx. 4, where, not only the martyrs, but those who had not joined in superstition and apostacy, live and reign with Christ a thousand years. We may all attain this crown: Oh! to think that

fifty years hence we may all be wearing this crown! God grant it may be so.

9. Paul, though so triumphantly expecting his glory, earnestly desires to see Timothy. Whence I gather, that the bright hopes set before us, should quicken us *to*, and not deter us *from*, immediate duties. And I gather too, how strong an attachment Christian love is; we should cultivate this strong love, and delight in the society of our fellow-Christians. We may see, from his earnestly desiring Timothy to come, that the work was growing, and the gospel spreading at Rome: we may see, too, how the holy Apostle was helped by the young Timothy; so, my dear children may be a great help and comfort to their parents. We are all needful to each other, the younger helping the elder, and the elder guiding the younger.

9. Next comes a very melancholy history; "*Demas*," of whom the Apostle had made mention, Colossians iv. 14; classing him with Luke; he had gone a great way with the Apostle,—he had deceived others—he had deceived himself—he thought he was among the chosen disciples of Jesus; but there was an unsubdued, dominant sin ruling in his mind, even *love of the world*. He went with Paul to Rome, but when he saw the prison, and found no earthly good was to be attained by following Jesus, then he forsook: thus there may be a Judas among the twelve apostles,—a Demas among the companions of Paul: Oh, the unutterable folly of Demas! now 1800 years he has been (if he repented not) in that awful place, with the rich man, tormented in the everlasting flames; he might have been a glorified saint, but he loved the world; he is in hell, unless indeed he repented, of which we have no account; and he will be there for ever. "They went out from us, because they were not of us, for had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us," says the Apostle; and *our* only safety, my dear family, is in our God; we have no strength of our own. "*Hold up* my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." But the Apostle proceeds;—"*Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto*

Dalmatia ;" we see here, by what energetic measures the gospel was first spread.

11. "*Only Luke*," &c. It is interesting to know that the beloved physician,—and he who wrote the Gospel of Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles,—was the companion of the writer of the Epistles ; but perhaps, the most interesting part of our portion this morning, is the account of Mark, who, like Demas, had fallen. Acts xv. 38. Mark, however, having really the love of his Saviour in his heart, was recovered, having perhaps, been brought to repentance, by the sharp contention he had occasioned between Paul and Barnabas ; and having been humbled by the decided course Paul thought it necessary to take. And now, Paul (just like our blessed Saviour, when he says, "Go tell my disciples *and Peter*,") sends for Mark ; and afterwards Mark became bishop of Alexandria, and was a great blessing to the church. These two histories put together in the Bible, of Demas and Mark, seem to say, on the one hand, 'If you are standing, do not presume ; if you have fallen, do not despair.' Falls recovered from, and duly improved, may be made a blessing. David, after his fall, wrote the fifty-first Psalm ; Peter, his beautiful Epistles ; and Mark became "*profitable for the ministry*." You see the very names of Scripture, connected with their little histories, convey to us many useful lessons.

12. We often hear of Tychicus as being with St. Paul. You see Paul did not leave Ephesus unprovided for, when he called Timothy to come to him ; but why would not Tychicus do for St. Paul, as well as Timothy ? The Lord has different work for us all to do in his service, and this may be a great comfort ;—the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, all have their work : and if we cannot serve our Master in one, we may in another. So, my children, you may help me in visiting my poor, and in other ways.

13. "*The cloke*," &c. Was it worth while in an inspired epistle to put in anything about a "*cloke ?*" Oh, yes, thank God, the Holy Spirit condescended to put in about the "*cloke*,"—it does give such a reality to it all ; and be-

sides, we learn some useful lessons from it. We see that the great Apostle of the Gentiles, at the close of a laborious ministry, was so poor he could not do without a "*cloke he had left*" behind him: he had not enriched himself with worldly good. Oh, what disinterested love, does he shew us an example of! What deadness to the world! And I am sure I have found it a comfort, in leaving things behind on my journies—to remember that an inspired Apostle could be so careless, as to leave his "*cloke*" behind him; "*And the books.*" Why did he want books? He had Divine inspiration. Yes, but Paul would seek instruction from books, and not think them useless; and perhaps, too, he might want them to distribute, as little memorials among his friends before his martyrdom. We have no account what these "*parchments*" were; they might be manuscripts or not.

14. We hear an account of "*Alexander,*" in 1 Tim. i. 1—20, where Paul delivered him to Satan; but now finding he still persisted in his evil course, he gave him up, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to the judgment of God. *Alexander's* is a very awful case of a man making a profession of religion (as he must have done, or Paul would not have told Timothy to beware of him, ver. 15), thus withstanding the gospel; and it shows it is not any obscurity in Divine truth, which prevents our receiving it, but the want of holy and gracious dispositions in us;—our disliking the truth. I suppose Alexander was guilty of that sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which John tells us not to pray for, under the name of the sin unto death, 1 John v. 16.—And I think that there are some men in our day, who have had a religious education, (at least *one* I know has) who come under this awful sin.

15. We must not be surprised at resistance to the truth; even Paul had to encounter it.

16. This is universally supposed to refer to his appearance before the emperor Nero,—"*at my first answer,*" the Greek word implies an apology after a charge: from thence Justin Martyr and Tertullian's apologies were named:—

"*No man stood*," &c. I suppose even Luke forsook him, or perhaps Providence hindered his attendance, but they all evidently shrunk from continuing with him. Oh if Paul had failed then, if he had then given way!—you see here, my dear family, the immense moment at a critical juncture of confessing the truth as it is Jesus; and that we may stand at a trying moment, let us gain now the blessed habit of confessing Christ, now, in all societies and company. "*But all forsook me;*" just like his master, forsaken by his twelve disciples; oh, how ashamed they would be afterwards, of their forsaking him,—how this very forsaking might be the cause of their afterwards becoming a thousand-fold more bold, in the defence of the gospel. "*Let it not be laid to their charge.*" This is striking when contrasted with his prayer about Alexander;—one had sinned unto death, the others through frailty: oh, how sweet is that grace, which casts all our sins into the depths of the sea; and though the book of God is full of accusations against us, yet freely blots them out in the blood of Jesus! You see we may sin, and yet not have it laid to our charge, through the blood-shedding of Jesus, and the prayer of faith.

17. Like our Lord, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Nero had, it is true, thousands of brave soldiers ready to obey his nod; his captains and officers were all about him; but whence derived he all this power? It was all entrusted to him by a higher hand; not a breath could escape the lips of Nero, not a limb could his soldiers move, without the will of God, who was not visibly present, but *inwardly*, *spiritually*, and *effectively*:—as in the case of Luther, who when going to the Diet of Worms, was so inwardly strengthened by the presence of the Lord, that he said when his friends would have dissuaded him from going, "Though every tile of every house in Worms were a devil, yet I would go:" and he did go and triumphed there. Observe the deep design of love in all this, "*that by me the preaching* &c." Our Lord loved St. Paul, and would have rejoiced to deliver him for his own sake, but there was a farther purpose in it; the wicked emperor Nero himself was to hear

a gospel sermon, an opportunity was to be given to him ; and to his whole court, of hearing the glorious truths of the gospel, but he rejected all this love. Methinks, however, I see one after another of his court, or among the soldiers, converted ; saying, This is a child of God, this is the truth, —and so the end of love was answered, "*that all the Gentiles might hear.*" Were anything of this kind to occur in our Queen Victoria's palace, how soon it would get into the newspapers and spread to every corner of the kingdom : now though communication was not so rapid at Rome, yet in a measure I suppose this would be brought about through the Roman Empire ; all the Gentiles would hear. "*And I was delivered,*" &c., referring outwardly to Nero, and inwardly and spiritually to him, of whom Nero was but the agent, even the Devil. Nero had power to hurt his body ; but Satan, had the Lord permitted, had power to destroy both his body and soul. Oh, if he had flinched then, if, overcome with fear and alarm, he had dishonoured the gospel, then indeed, he would have got into the power of the lion. What I want you to see, my dear family, is, that the great thing to be feared is not the suffering of the body, but the devices of Satan and his temptations : our question should not be—how may I escape suffering ? but, how may I escape sin ? sin is the real evil we have all to dread.

Observe the form of the expression ; not *from a violent death*, not from the *cruelty of the tyrant*, but from *every evil work*. You see what Paul dreaded ; and this is what our martyrs felt : how much worse it was to deny Christ and escape martyrdom, than to suffer for him. So Cranmer felt, when, overcome with temptation, he for a season recanted and signed his hand to Papal error ; when strengthened again by God, and brought to the flames, he first held in the fire the right hand which had signed the recantation, saying—'This wicked hand, it shall burn first.' And, my dear family, I do consider it very important for *us* to get a firm hold of this great truth, because I think we shall all be brought to the furnace of trial, to the question,

whether we will deny Christ or suffer: and as your father that loves you, I tell you the grand evil to be feared is sin; it is infinitely better to suffer than to sin. "*And shall preserve me to his heavenly kingdom;*" the Greek word is, "shall *save* me," &c., showing that our continuance in grace is, to the very last, *a salvation;* it was so even with an inspired Apostle. "*Heavenly*," its *origin, character, inhabitants, glory, communion with God*—all heavenly. "*Kingdom*," visible, manifested, glorious, a kingdom where all are kings, reigning over the earth. What a glorious prospect! is it not worth a struggle. He who preserved Paul unto it, can preserve us too; the fruits of Paul's noble faith and sweet assurance being a fervid desire for the glory of Christ. This should be the grand governing desire of our souls, to ascribe glory to Jesus.

19. *Prisca and Aquila*, are mentioned first in Acts xviii. 2,—again in Rom. xvi. 3, 4. "*and the household of Onesiphorus.*" His *household* is mentioned before, 2 Tim. i. 16. Perhaps he himself was much from home; Paul loves not only his friends but their families.

20. We hear of *Erastus* elsewhere as the companion of Paul. *Trophimus* we read of, Acts xx. 4, and xxi. 29,—we may in the work of the gospel, meet with difficulties and impediments, coming not only from man, but from the providence of God. It will be found, in the great day, that all was wisely ordered; Paul was thrown more simply upon God; *Trophimus*, too, left to depend on God, and *Miletum* doubtless blessed by his stay there.

21. What an affectionate, warm heart Paul had, always gushing out with love:—travelling might be more dangerous in winter. "*Eubulus.*" &c. There is much that is interesting about some of these names. *Linus* was afterwards Bishop of Rome, but so uncertain is what the Roman Catholics place such confidence in, their unbroken apostolical succession, that their own writers disagree as to whether he came before or after Clement; thus we are taught, not to glory and trust in man, but only in the

Lord. Then *Claudia*, there is reason to believe, was a British lady, and through her family the gospel came to us; the evidence is not quite clear on the subject, but from Tacitus there is reason to believe it was so.

22. When we think of the infinite grace, and riches, and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and our emptiness, and weakness, and need; what a prayer is this! Observe the enlargement of love,—"*Grace be with you;*" in the plural, like that,—"Draw *me* and *we* will run after thee." The last recorded words of Paul,—a desire of grace for the whole church; Paul, who began his life in blasphemy and persecution.

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